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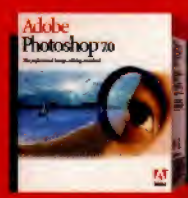

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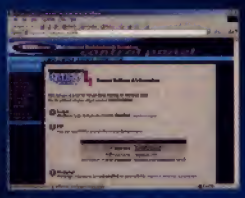

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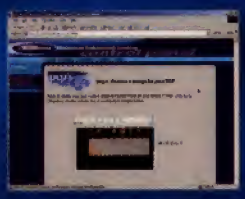

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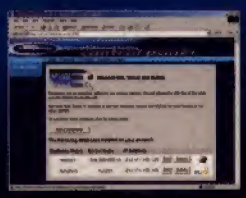

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Welcome

MEET THE DEEP-THINKERS THAT CAREFULLY MOULD THE PRACTICAL INTERNET PHILOSOPHY...

Thomas Watson

TECHNICAL EDITOR

Despite having a brain the size of a planet, Thomas still claims that true enlightenment can only be attained by listening to the theme tune from the *Krankies*

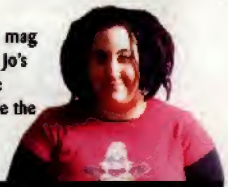
James Thornton

STAFF WRITER

Embarking on a mission of self-discovery, via the local pub, James discovered a sock he'd lost two years previously. What this means is anybody's guess

Jo Cole

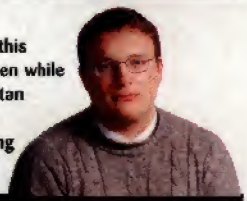
SENIOR SUB EDITOR



Along with making sure the mag arrives in the shops on time, Jo's been doing her best to revise Nietzsche's theories to include the concept of the superwoman

Paul Blachford

SENIOR DESIGNER



Paul doesn't always look this solemn – this pic was taken while he was holed up in a Tibetan monastery pondering the sound of one-hand clapping

Clive Parker

NET TECHNICAL SPECIALIST

Clive is dedicated to providing answers, not questions. Fortunately, unlike the Oracle at Delphi, his answers are supplied in plain English

James Seabright

WEB SITE DESIGN SPECIALIST

Another technical sage, James is the only man we know capable of striking an esoteric and harmonious balance between theatre production and Web design

Chris Ellison

COLUMNIST

As one of the UK's best-known Net freedom fighters, philosophy and contemplation play a big role in Chris's life. Read what he has to say in Netwatch

Who really controls the Internet? It's a question many of us must have pondered at one time or another and it's a question that could have serious implications for the way the Internet develops over the next few years.

At the time of writing, a mighty battle is being waged in the corridors of Internet power at ICANN, the mysterious but democratic corporation that governs the Internet. Some members of ICANN are keen to invite governments to play a greater role in the way the Net is run; others want the body to maintain its tradition of independence and continue to be elected by normal Internet users like you and me.

Striking the right balance between online freedom and the inevitable regulation that comes with a maturing Internet is always going to be difficult, but one thing the Internet can certainly do without is interference from governments – especially the US government.

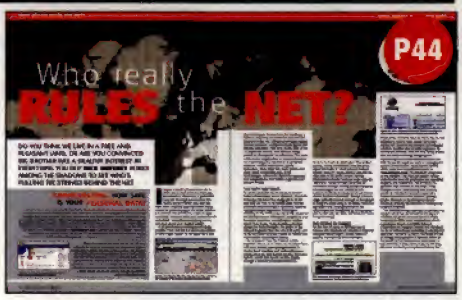
If the Internet is going to go forward over the next decade, it's vital that its spirit of independence is preserved and that power remains in as many hands as possible.

Considering that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand on the Internet, it's important that we fight for our rights as Internet users and exercise responsibility with our actions. Otherwise the Internet will end up being controlled by bodies like the US government, swallowed up by a large media empire or sold off lock stock and barrel to Bill Gates. And none of us want that to happen, do we?

Paul Newman, Editor
pauln@paragon.co.uk

Inside this issue of *Practical Internet*

Discover the finest free Net program of all time, as our experts bring you a rundown of the best 101 pieces of software around



Who's driving? Find out which people and companies are pulling the strings as we reveal the secret rulers of the Internet

Plan the perfect domain name strategy for your firm with our guide to playing the name game

Find out whether or not the latest version of Photoshop has our reviewers jumping through hoops with excitement

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Operating System	Linux	Linux/Win2K	Linux/Win2K	Linux/Win2K	Linux/Win2K
Domain Registration	+	+	+	+	+
Unlimited hits	+	+	+	+	+
Unlimited Domains	–	–	–	+	+
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Raid	N/A	N/A	Mirror	Num 5
Back Up	Customer	Customer	Tape 15/30 Gb	Tape 15/30 Gb
Transfer limit	10 Gb	15 Gb	25 Gb	50 Gb
IPs	1	1	1	1
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Practical internet

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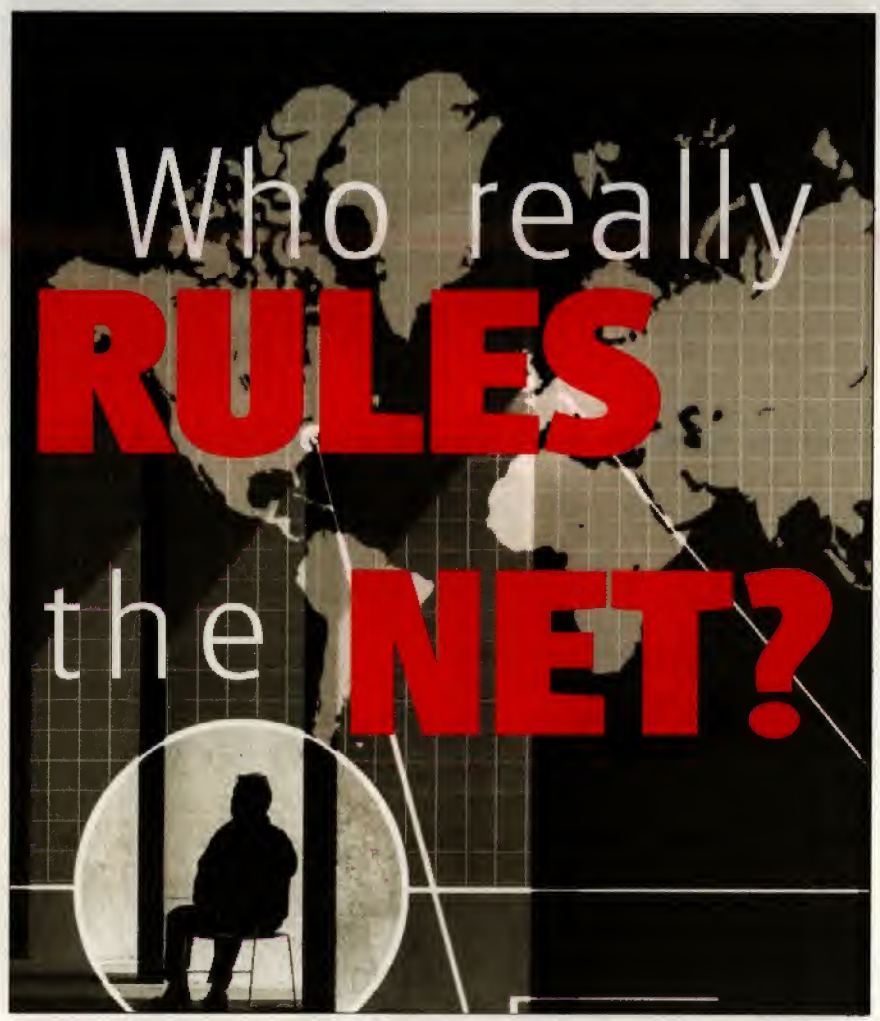

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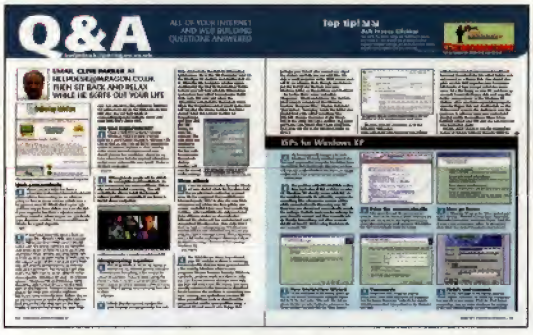

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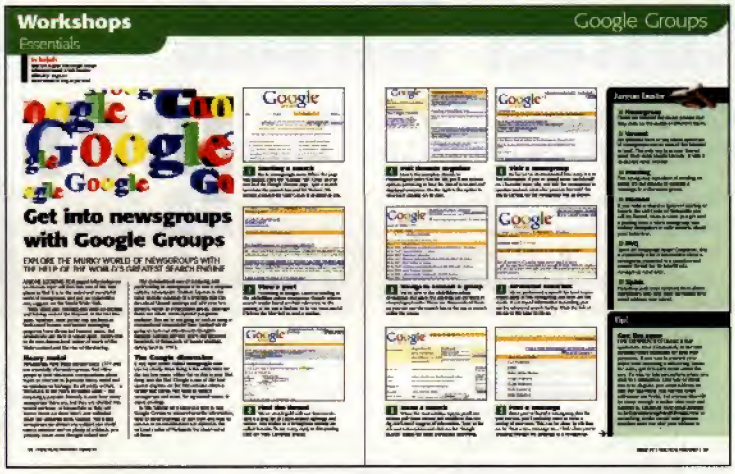

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MUST-READ STEP-BY-STEP HELP FOR BEGINNERS AND EXPERIENCED USERS ALIKE

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News

All the latest Web sites, products and services

Net impartiality under threat

ICANN SHAKE-UP SPARKS FEAR OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN INTERNET AFFAIRS

THE GOVERNMENT COULD soon have a greater say in who runs the Internet, following ICANN's decision to abolish its 'At-large' elections, whereby ordinary Net users could vote in its board members.

Critics claim the changes will mean an end to public participation in the running of the organisation, which was set up in 1998 as an independent body to oversee the allocation of domain names and the routing system that connects computers over the Net.

Since then, ICANN has come under fire from observers who claim it is failing to understand its purpose and pandering to the demands of big business.

After earlier issuing a call for "meaningful participation and representation for individual users", ICANN announced that board members would no longer be elected by everyday Net users.

ICANN president, Stuart Lynn, has instead proposed that these 'At-large' elected representatives would be made up of members nominated by governments.

A possible consequence is that independence of the Internet could be jeopardised if governments have a strong enough representation to dictate the policy that controls how the Internet is run.

'No replacements'

Voices on the ICANN board such as the North American representative Karl Auerbach, an experienced Internet engineer, would be replaced by business people and political allies that have less knowledge of Net users' needs and issues.

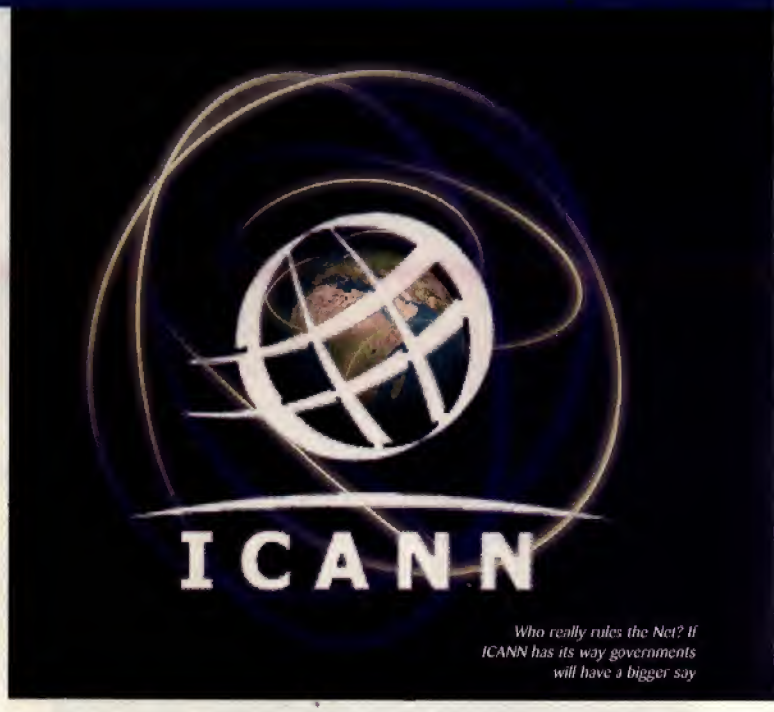
"The Internet will now be run by a body that adheres to principles that otherwise died with the era of Queen Victoria and King Leopold," said Auerbach.

"My board seat, along with those of the other four elected board members, will simply vaporise this fall, with no replacements, no elections… no nothing."

However, ICANN claims that changes needed to be made as the previous system wasn't working.

"GOVERNMENTS COULD DICTATE THE POLICY THAT CONTROLS HOW THE INTERNET IS RUN"

At a meeting in Ghana regarding its future, the ICANN committee concluded that "The Board is not persuaded that global elections are the only or the best means of achieving meaningful public representation or the informed participation of Internet users in the ICANN process."



Who really rules the Net? If ICANN has its way governments will have a bigger say

Necessary reform

Many agree that ICANN needs reforming in order to better serve its purpose. Johnathan Robinson, director of business development at NetNames (**www.netnames.com**) said: "It's very important that there's a single regulator for the Internet industry but ICANN hasn't made the best job of it so far, so I'm definitely in favour of reform."

Robinson, who also sits on the board at Afilias, the registry running the new **.info** domain, believes that ICANN was right to do away with representatives elected by the public. "It was a brave experiment that ultimately proved to be too idealistic, as the Internet public as a whole were only represented by a vocal minority.

"Governments need to be involved with the running of the organisation, as eCommerce is now a fundamental part of the economy and domain names are an integral part of this" said Robinson.

See *Who Really Rules The Net* on page 44 for more on ICANN.

You and who's army?

IS ICANN RIGHT TO REMOVE THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO DECIDE WHO RUNS THE ORGANISATION?

For:

"The Board is not persuaded that global elections are the only or the best means of achieving meaningful public representation or the informed participation of Internet users in the ICANN process."
ICANN committee, speaking at its conference in Accra, Ghana.

"Governments need to be involved with the running of the organisation, as eCommerce is now a fundamental part of the economy and domain names are an integral part of this," **Johnathan Robinson, director of business development at Netnames (www.netnames.co.uk), an ICANN accredited registrar.**

Against:

"There does not appear to be a pressing need for any more direct governmental involvement and there are plenty of reasons to suggest that such a move would not be in ICANN's best interests. Those governments that choose to be actively involved in ICANN's decision-making processes are already well represented through the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)." **Ken Sorrie, director and co-founder of Internetters (www.internetters.com), an ICANN accredited registrar.**

"At the recent ICANN meeting in Accra, Ghana, there was strong agreement with the analysis of ICANN's President, Dr M. Stuart Lynn, that ICANN is not working as it currently stands. However, there was considerable disagreement from all sides with his proposed solution." **Spokesperson for Nominet (www.nominet.co.uk), the national registry for all Internet domains ending in .uk.**

shorts

→ Star Internet (**www.star.net.uk**) has introduced its new SDSL broadband service. Symmetrical Digital Subscriber Line has a lower contention rate (5:1) and unlike ADSL, uploading is just as quick as downloading.

→ Are you anxious to get hold of a domain name but find it's already taken? The new Domain Watcher service from 123-reg (**www.123-reg.co.uk**) lets you track the availability of a name then registers it to you as soon as becomes available. The service costs £15+VAT per domain plus the normal registration fee.

Got a news story?
Please contact
James Thornton
Telephone: 01202 209379
Fax: 01202 299955
Email: jamest@paragon.co.uk

Unmetered access costs are hiked

AS BROADBAND PRICES TUMBLE, UNMETERED NET USERS PAY THE PRICE

JUST AS BRITAIN finally sees the cost of broadband Net access fall, Britain's 'big three' ISPs have started to up the cost of their unmetered dial-up services.

Both BTopenworld (**www.btopenworld.com**) and AOL (**www.aol.co.uk**) have pushed up their unmetered charges by £1 to £15.99 per month. Users of the BTopenworld Anytime service and AOL's FlatRate Internet access package will be affected by the changes. Freeserve (**www.freeserve.com**) has also bumped up the cost of its AnyTime unmetered product from £12.99 to £13.99 per month.

Is it too much?

There are some voices within the Net industry, though, that feel the price hikes are unacceptable. Andy Williams, campaign manager for broadband advocates Broadband 4 Britain (**www.broadband4britain.co.uk**) said: "We are appalled that the price of flat-rate dial-up access for the vast majority of Internet users is set to rise, and are suspicious of the timing and motives behind it."

The ISPs are insisting their price cuts have not been made merely to encourage people to migrate from the unmetered dial-up services to broadband connections.

Matt Peacock, chief communications officer for AOL said: "This is the first price rise we have implemented since launching AOL Flat Rate in September 2000.

"The decision has been made following the investment of tens of millions of pounds in improvements to our network and software since we launched the service and reflects our commitment to invest in our unmetered service in the future."

Banned for peddling pee

IS THIS ONLINE SALESMAN TAKING THE P***?

A MAN WHO sold his own urine on the Internet has been banned following a Supreme Court Ruling in the USA.

Online wee seller, Kenneth Curtis, has been emptying his bladder for $69 a shot since 1996. The samples, which are guaranteed drug-free, are bought by punters wishing to pass dope tests at work.

However, the court banned him from flogging his juice as the result of a law passed in 1999, specifically forbidding people to sell urine online. After lodging an appeal with the Supreme Court, Curtis was told he could get up to three years in jail as a first time offender.

As a result, he has now moved his business to North Carolina, where people can take the piss out of him as much as they like. **(That's enough pee jokes –Ed.)**

Cut and thrust

ISPS CONTINUE TO MAKE BROADBAND PRICE CUTS

Ellen McArthur in BT's new broadband ad

THE BROADBAND REVOLUTION continues to grow, as more ISPs announce cut-price ADSL services.

Nildram (**www.nildram.net**) has jumped aboard the cheap broadband bandwagon with its new Home500A self-install product for home Net users. The service is available for £25.99 per month, for a minimum period of 12 months, plus activation charge of £58.75.

PlusNet's Free Online ISP (**www.free-online.co.uk**) is offering users the chance to sign up to a high speed connection for £22.99 a month. Meanwhile, One.Tel's (**www.onetel.co.uk**) Unplugged 500 plug and play service has been launched, at a cost of £27.99 per month. Telewest (**www.telewest.co.uk**) has also dropped its prices from £33.99 to £29.99 a month.

Nildram's marketing manager, Iain Ogilvie, is confident the year ahead will see dial-up users making the switch to ADSL, saying: "Since the launch of BT broadband ADSL services in the UK we have seen a healthy take up amongst the 'early adopter' community – these price cuts, combined with improvements to our portfolio, will help stimulate broadband take-up among a far wider audience."

Meanwhile, BTopenworld (**www.btopenworld.com**) has recruited the services of yachtswoman Ellen McArthur to promote its new £29.99 a month broadband service.

Silver surfers catch Internet fever

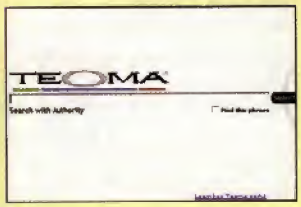
DON'T LISTEN TO anyone that tells you the Net is for youngsters, because a new survey shows that silver surfers rule the roost.

The number of over 55-year-olds using the Net has increased by 90 per cent during the last year according to analysts NetValue (**www.netvalue.com**). Two million 'mature' people now accessing the Net, making up 13 per cent of the UK Internet population.

The most popular online haunts for senior Net users include genealogy and ancestry sites. "Reaching that age you start looking back and different things like tracing your family tree become important," said Alkie Manias, managing director of NetValue.

NEW Web sites

THE BEST NEW SITES UNCOVERED BY OUR PACK OF NEWS HOUNDS



Teoma
www.teoma.com
Aiming to topple Google from its position as king of the search engines, this relaunched site serves up a new way of searching as it is able to pinpoint 'communities' of linked Web sites, which help to categorise results by subject areas rather than keywords.

Battersea Dogs Home
www.dogshome.org
With information and advice on every aspect of owning a hound, this site is truly the mutt's nuts for any responsible master. The interactive pages are stacked with resources on everything from canine counselling and first aid, to details of a lost dogs line and buying gifts for your pets.

Elton John World
www.eltonjohnworld.com
Not every short, gay, bespectacled Watford supporter can claim to be an international superstar, but Sir Elton John has managed it. The wee fella's also been immortalised in this site, which aims to spill the beans on Elton's latest movements.

News shorts

→ Four out of five British adults would rather give up chocolate, smoking and alcohol than stop using the Net. That's the verdict of a new survey by MSN (www.msn.co.uk).

→ Anyone who's caught the World Cup fever can now go for glory themselves following the launch of a Subbuteo mobile phone game. The SMS-based trivia game allows users to pit their wits against each other through a scale of increasing cash prizes. Details are available from www.codeonline.com.

NEW Software

READ UP ON ALL THE LATEST AND GREATEST SOFTWARE

AFTER SHOT

www.digitalworkshop.com

Digital cameras have become the ultimate 'boy toy', and this latest application from the makers of Paint Shop Pro allows digicam owners to organise, fix and share photos from their device. The software lets users acquire photos from their camera, organise them into searchable albums, then enhance and share their photos with the minimum amount of hassle.

SIMPLY TRANSLATING

www.mediagold.co.uk

If you've ever tried exchanging emails or chatting online with a foreigner, you'll realise how difficult it can be to fathom out what each other is saying. Luckily, this new program from MediaGold translates emails, documents and even letters quickly from English to Spanish, German, French, Italian and Portuguese, or vice versa.

MAXIMIZER 7

www.multiactive.co.uk

Anyone who's serious about maintaining a business on the Net should bear in mind that proper organisation is one of the quick routes to lasting success. Maximiser 7 allows online wheeler dealers to manage their address book and contacts, organise their time, process and track sales, and improve the way they handle their customers. Users can even construct an online store using the built-in ecBuilder Lite software.

NTL is close to bankruptcy

CABLE INTERNET FIRM STRUGGLES TO COPE WITH MONSTER DEBTS

POPULAR BROADBAND INTERNET service provider, ntl (**www.ntl.com**) is fighting to avoid bankruptcy, as it tries to shake off its massive debt.

> **"AS FAR AS OUR NET SERVICES ARE CONCERNED, IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL"** MALCOLM PADLEY, NTL SPOKESMAN

Despite being the UK's leading provider of high speed Internet access, boasting some 180,000 subscribers, the company is now in negotiations in an effort to restructure its £12 billion debt.

This debt has been accumulated over the years through ntl's acquisition of more than 12 companies in the last few years, including Cable & Wireless for over £8 billion. This has left ntl in a precarious state, and the firm is finding it difficult to even pay off the interest on the debt.

Ntl is currently in talks with its bondholders in a complex effort to swap more than half the company's debt with equity, effectively turning them from creditors to joint-owners of the company.

Ntl's chief executive, Barclay Knapp, felt that the talks with creditors had been positive, saying "Our recapitalisation process is underway and making progress. We are in the midst of a constructive dialogue with our bondholders, bank group and potential investors."

Despite the threat of bankruptcy hanging over it, ntl (www.ntl.com) insists it's "business as usual"

Malcolm Padley, spokesman at ntl, stressed that customers will be unaffected by the changes. "There are a number of different options we're exploring at the moment aimed at reducing our debt and strengthening the balance sheet, but as far as our Internet and television services are concerned, it's very much business as usual."

ntl:

Britain's own Bionic Man

BRITISH PROFESSOR BECOMES THE WORLD'S FIRST CYBORG

THE PROPHESY OF the *Terminator* film could be upon us sooner than we thought, after a British professor became the world's first cyborg.

Professor Kevin Warwick of Reading University (**www.reading.ac.uk**) has undergone ground-breaking surgery so that his nervous system can be rigged up to a computer. The part-man, part-machine had a tiny chip implanted into his arm allowing readings to be taken of the electrical impulses running through his nerves.

The signals will encode Professor Warwick's movements such as wiggling fingers and feelings like shock and pain and transmit them to a computer, so they can be recorded for the first time. It's hoped that the experiment will lead to a breakthrough in medical technology for people left paralysed by spinal cord damage, like *Superman* actor Christopher Reeve.

Professor Warwick – the man with the cyborg arm

"It would be good in the future if we can give people with a serious injury like this the ability to move around to some extent at least," said Professor Warwick. "There are no signs of either rejection or infection and just being able to keep the implant in place is itself a success." Further details of Kevin's operation are available at **www.kevinwarwick.com**.

STAT ATTACK

Top ten DVDs

WHAT'S BEEN FLYING OFF THE SHELVES AT AMAZON (WWW.AMAZON.CO.UK) THIS MONTH

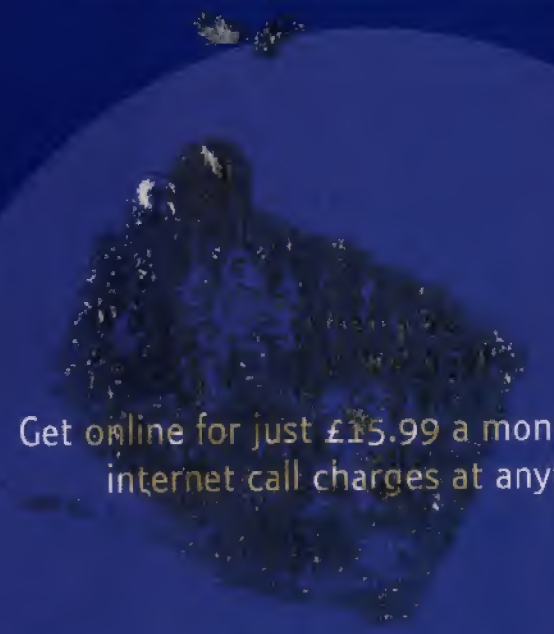
1. **Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone** Widescreen version
2. **Star Trek: The Next Generation** Complete Series 1
3. **Braveheart** Special Two Disc Edition
4. **The West Wing** Series 1 Part 1
5. **Moulin Rouge** Two Disc Set
6. **Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon** Widescreen version
7. **Amelie** DTS
8. **American Pie Box Set:** The Complete Pie
9. **Enemy at the Gates** 4:3 format
10. **Gladiator** Two Disc Set

The President's elected at number four

It's twee French fun at number seven

LOOK FORWARD BTopenworld

Open



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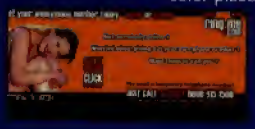
News

shorts

→ A new service promising to make online chat rooms a safer place has been launched. Ring-me.com (**www.ring-me.com**) provides temporary telephone numbers that are automatically redirected to your own number for free, meaning that you don't have to worry about your home number falling into the hands of a chatroom weirdo.



→ Radio One has revamped its Web site (**www.bbc.co.uk/radio1**) to include new interactive elements and provide inside information on the music businesses from those in the know. The new 'OneMusic' section lets visitors pop questions to industry experts, chat with other music fans and read features on the biggest artists around.

BBC RADIO 1 97-99FM

HOT Web gear

A LOOK A THE PRODUCTS THAT SHOULD MAKE YOU GO 'MMM'

Iomega Predator

www.dabs.com

Arm yourself with this deadly weapon from Iomega and you'll be burning discs at a lightning pace. The slick-looking device comes with USB 2 compatibility and is capable of writing at blistering speeds of up to 24x. And the Predator comes with a suite of free software that allows extreme music fans to create and convert MP3s and rip CDs quickly and easily.

£205.62

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (DVD)

www.jag-tec.com

A smash at the box office, the tale of the 11-year-old smart-arse conjuror has finally been transferred to digital video and looks set to become the hottest DVD of the summer. If you're a fan of Hogwarts' most famous pupil then the Net is definitely the best place to pick the film up on the cheap.

£16.99

England away kit

www.kitbag.com

What better way to roar Sven and the boys on than by sporting a new England away kit? The shirt is reversible with red on one side and dark blue on the other, so that the team can change them over if there's a colour clash with the opposition, or if they spill curry down their clean shirts.

£36.99

Boost for disabled Internet users

NEW ACCESSIBILITY SOLUTIONS BRING FREEDOM FOR ALL

NET USERS WITH disabilities are at last being recognised following the launch of a series of initiatives aimed at improving accessibility.

Organisers of the 2004 Olympic Games have launched what they claim is the first Web site in the Olympic family to meet international standards for disabled access at **www.athens.olympic.org**.

The site has been designed for use on browsers that are used by people with hearing, visual or physical impairments. By using a range of innovative alternatives to the traditional point-and-click interface, such as brail screens and synthetic speech, these browsers help make the Internet accessible to everyone.

Until now, these alternative browsers have been largely ignored by site builders, a problem which was highlighted during the last Olympics when the organisers of the Sydney Games were successfully sued for failing to meet accessibility standards.

However, developments in Web creation software are now making it easier for sites to throw their doors open to anyone.

*Managing to avoid the mistakes made by the Webmasters for the Sydney Games site, **www.athens.olympic.org** is a triumph of accessibility*

Flash solutions

Macromedia's (**www.macromedia.com**) latest offering, Flash MX, comes complete with integrated tools for creating accessible content. The software allows users to add descriptive text to animations and user interface elements, meaning that people with disabilities can still experience the Flash content.

WGBH recently created an accessible online multimedia site for PBS American Experience (**www.pbs.org**) using Flash MX. WGBH's director of interactive content, Peter Pinch said: "Before Macromedia Flash MX, there was no way for us to make interactive content like this accessible. Now we can make an interactive experience that works with assistive technology and include captions for people who need information presented in multiple modes."

Hoax of the month

BROADBAND FOR LESS THAN £20 A MONTH? SHURELY THERE'S BEEN SHOME MISHTAKE

SPEED-HUNGRY NET users were foaming at the mouth after a news story on Net4Nowt (**www.net4nowt.com**) reported that a Manchester-based Internet firm was launching the UK's cheapest broadband service, for just £19.99 a month.

The 'Exclusive' story broke the news that a company called Filar Loop (remember the name) was to be the first to provide ADSL for less than 20 quid a month. The article seemed innocent enough, there was a quote from the company's marketing manager and it included precise pricing details. The story was even picked up on by the *Daily Mirror* and repeated in its 'Kelly's I' column. Internet users began frantically posting messages to the Net4Nowt forum seeking the URL of Filar in order to sign up to this cost-busting deal.

Eyebrows were also raised in the *Practical Internet* office until someone pointed out that the story had been broken on the first day of April, and 'Filar Loop' had a certain anagramatical ring to it. Suddenly, everything became clear.

Net4Nowt's Paul Hillbeck later admitted to pulling off the stunt.

Damn those April Fool pranks

The bitterest Bill

DESPITE BEING OUT of office for over a year, Bill Clinton is posing a threat to Net users.

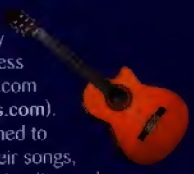
Antivirus firm Sophos (**www.sophos.com**) is warning Net users about a new email worm, known as Caric-A, which claims to contain a screensaver sending up the former president. However, instead of getting some cigar-related jape, clicking on the accompanying attachment causes a virus to be forwarded to anyone listed in the recipient's address book.

The text at the end of the email should help to reduce its malicious impact, as it comes with a claim that it has been scanned for viruses, but misspells the word 'virus'.

→ Blossoming gardeners can let their green fingers run wild thanks to the launch of UK Style's new online Garden Designer at **www.ukstyle.tv**. The site is blooming with pruning tips and lets you drag and drop flowers, shrubs and furniture into a virtual garden.

→ Booyakasha! Fans of Staines' most wanted gangsta, Ali G, can now get hold of some 'wicked' mobile phone games, ringtones and logos based on the *Ali G Indahouse* movie. The official interactive services are available for download from **www.vizzavi.co.uk/tvandradio/alig_indahouse.jsp**.

→ Aspiring songwriters and musicians can finally come out of the wilderness using PublishYourSongs.com (**www.publishyoursongs.com**). The site has been designed to allow users to submit their songs, which are then published online and presented to movers and shakers within the record industry.



The Google bombers take aim

NEW TECHNIQUES EXPLOIT LEADING SEARCH ENGINE'S RANKING SYSTEM

SITE OWNERS HAVE found a way to exploit Google (**www.google.com**) in order to improve the ranking of their pages.

Users have discovered a way to 'bomb' the popular search engine to ensure that their site is listed close to the top of the results for certain search phrases.

Until now, Google was thought to be immune to the sneaky tactics employed by many businesses to improve their site's ranking in searches. This is because instead of just looking for keywords when it crawls the Web, Google also ranks a page's importance by the number of other sites that link to it.

However, some Net users have now found a way to influence their rankings by exploiting these methods. The idea of 'bombing' has now been taken up by people who run Weblogs who collaborate with each in order to play pranks on friends or promote certain causes by ensuring that Google ranks their pages near the top. Further details on the intricacies of Google bombing are available from **www.corante.com**.

Practical internet
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE
30 MAY 2002

Is the Net responsible for gambling addicts?

ONLINE PUNTERS MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP A SERIOUS HABIT SAYS NEW SURVEY

PEOPLE WHO ENJOY a flutter online are more at risk of developing a gambling addiction than other gamblers, according to psychologists.

A study has warned that the huge growth of the Internet will give people more places to bet online, increasing the risk of more people suffering from the physical and emotional problems linked with compulsive gambling.

While Internet gambling was currently the least common form of betting, the survey found that a majority of people who enjoy a punt online had the most serious problems with their addictions.

Commenting on their findings in the journal *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours*, Dr George Ladd and Dr Nancy Petry said: "The availability of Internet gambling may draw individuals who seek out isolated and anonymous contexts for their gambling.

"Accessibility and use of Internet gambling opportunities are likely to increase along with the explosive growth of the Internet."

Internet gambling is now big business and the sector has become the fifth largest advertiser online. According to Web analyst firm Jupiter Media Metrix (**www.jmm.com**), there were 13.6 million visitors to online gambling sites in the month of December alone.

Serif serves up a media medley

NEW SOFTWARE DESIGNED TO GIVE YOU MORE CONTROL OVER YOUR DIGITAL LIFE

SERIF HAS LAUNCHED a new application aimed at helping Net users manage large collections of digital photos, MP3 music and video files. MediaPlus catalogues and organises media files, and is designed to make it easy to locate files. The software converts digital files into customisable thumbnail views, allowing users to quickly pinpoint photos, sound or video.

Users can sort collections of photos into themed albums, which feature drag-and-drop support. The program also comes with tools for publishing photos directly to the Web and boasts a range of templates for customising the appearance of users' online albums.

MediaPlus features its own download manager, providing users with the ability to tap into the range of photos, sounds and videos from the Net. This can be used to 'spider' from a certain site by reading the links on that site and then automatically download related images.

MediaPlus is available for £41.73 and can be purchased online from **www.serif.com**.

Net Watch

INTERNET FREEDOM'S **CHRIS ELLISON** CASTS A CRITICAL EYE OVER THE LATEST EVENTS ON THE NET

AS I HAVE noted in this column before, after the attacks of 11 September last year, President Bush wasted no time in declaring that the US was at war with an unknown enemy from an unknown place. The US and UK administrations quickly rushed through new laws removing people's rights, just in case they were unknown enemies from unknown places. In Bush's desire to give a wounded America a new sense of purpose and mission, the important thing was to declare war.

Snowball effect

The purpose of the measures was to find those responsible for the attacks and stop doing anything like it again. But the "War on Terrorism" quickly assumed a life of its own. First the decision was made to bomb Afghanistan. Failing to find anyone actually involved, let alone Osama Bin Laden, the US intelligence services set about spreading the search.

"THE UNKNOWN ENEMY HAS NOW MASTERED THE INTERNET"

In an article which first appeared in the US and which was then taken up by the BBC, US officials reported they had intercepted emails from outside Afghanistan that might be from Al Qaeda supporters, who might be trying to meet with one another. Having mastered the art of hijacking, the unknown enemy now appeared to have mastered the evils of the Internet. The next stage was to focus on the world's biggest bogeyman: Saddam Hussein, and Iraq. Not an easy task since there was no evidence that he was involved in the 11 September attacks. But then that is another detail that can be sorted out later. I wonder if he uses email?

Internet Freedom can be contacted on campaign@netfreedom.org. The campaign's Web site is at www.netfreedom.org

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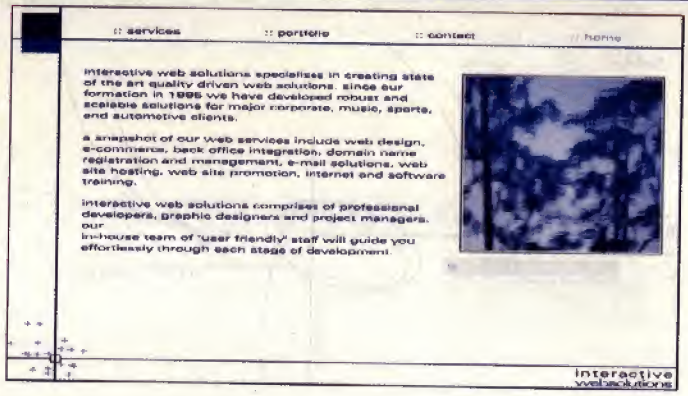

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Nick Pinson, Managing Director

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News

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→ Emails are now more popular than letters, according to Internet analysts NetValue (**www.netvalue.com**). The firm revealed that Net users sent 550 million emails in the month of January, compared to only 258 million letters posted in the same period.

IE tightens grip in browser battle

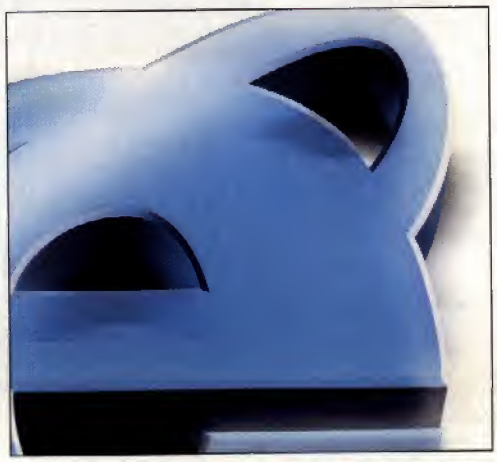
INTERNET EXPLORER INCREASES ITS DOMINANCE OVER NETSCAPE IN THE TUSSLE FOR MARKET SHARE

INTERNET EXPLORER HAS annihilated the competition in the battle of the Web browsers.

The latest version of Microsoft's browser, IE6, has become the weapon of choice for nearly a third of the world's Net users since its launch last August, according to figures published by StatMarket (**www.statmarket.com**).

IE5 is sitting pretty as the world's favourite tool for browsing the Web, while Netscape's browser has slipped to third place, with only a seven per cent share of the market. Netscape's share has plummeted from a steady 12 per cent which it held for more than a year before the launch of IE6.

"The fast adoption rate for IE6 has been a definite threat to Netscape's usage share," said Geoff Johnston, vice president of product marketing for StatMarket. "Although it originally looked as though Netscape had an entrenched core user base, IE6 has managed to take significant market share. It's do or die time now for Netscape."



Internet Explorer has once again extended its lead in the battle of the browsers. Who can fell Microsoft's Web Goliath now?

However, recent rumours have suggested that Netscape's parent company, AOL Time Warner, is considering converting its privately labelled IE browsers to Netscape browsers, which could cause a swing back to Netscape's favour, with AOL's global share of the ISP market standing at 13.12 percent.

"If AOL takes this step and Netscape continues to strengthen its browser, we could see another battle in the browser war," commented Johnston.

i-plus point

INTERNET KIOSKS HELP STAMP OUT VIOLENCE

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC violence can receive anonymous support thanks to a pioneering new Internet initiative.

The i-plus Internet kiosks will now contain a new domestic violence channel giving advice and contact details for women in abusive relationships.

The service, which has been trialled in London as part of Mayor Ken Livingstone's Domestic Violence strategy, is free of charge.

Mayor Livingstone said: "The domestic violence channel on i-plus kiosks will give anyone who is being subjected to domestic violence 24-hour, anonymous access to information that could save their lives." For further details, see **www.london.gov.uk**.

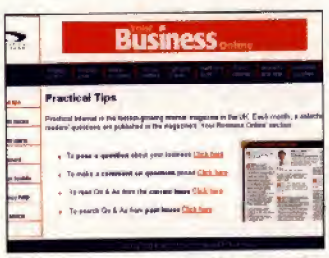
PI launches new site

PRACTICAL INTERNET AND SMALLBIZ.UK.COM LAUNCH YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE WEB SITE

PRACTICAL INTERNET HAS teamed up with Smallbiz UK to launch a new Web site for the magazine's Your Business Online section.

Readers of *PI's* dedicated section for small enterprises will now be able to post their business questions to the magazine online, interact with other business owners, access an archive of previous question and answer sessions and enjoy a host of resources supplied by Smallbiz UK.

"Forging a successful eCommerce venture in the current business climate is a tricky task. We hope that this new initiative will help to give small businesses a real boost by providing them with access to a comprehensive set of resources and enable them to interact with each other online" said *Practical Internet* Editor Paul Newman.



Post questions about your small business at the new Your Business Online Web site (www.yboanswers.co.uk)

The new site was created in conjunction with Smallbiz UK, an independent Web site providing advice for small companies. Managing Director Gerard Liston said: "Smallbiz UK provides a wide range of services and information for people running their own businesses. Our experience is that they want cost-effective and practical solutions to day-to-day business challenges. So, we are delighted to work with Practical Internet and help support the new 'Your Business Online' Web site."

The new Web site is live now and at **www.yboanswers.co.uk**. For additional information about Smallbiz UK visit the firm;s site at **www.smallbiz.uk.com**

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- Full PHP Support (UNIX Only)
- Full MySQL Database Support
- Full Perl & CGI Support
- Full CGI-BIN
- FREE Dynamic News Content
- Comprehensive Logs & Statistics
- WebMail Facility
- FREE Unlimited Use Of Dial-Up Facility
- UNLIMITED Free Technical Support
- Daily Backup
- Same Hour Setup
- Your Own VISP Branding - Your Logo in Webmail, Stats, 404 Error & Reserved
- Monthly payment options available

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iCandy

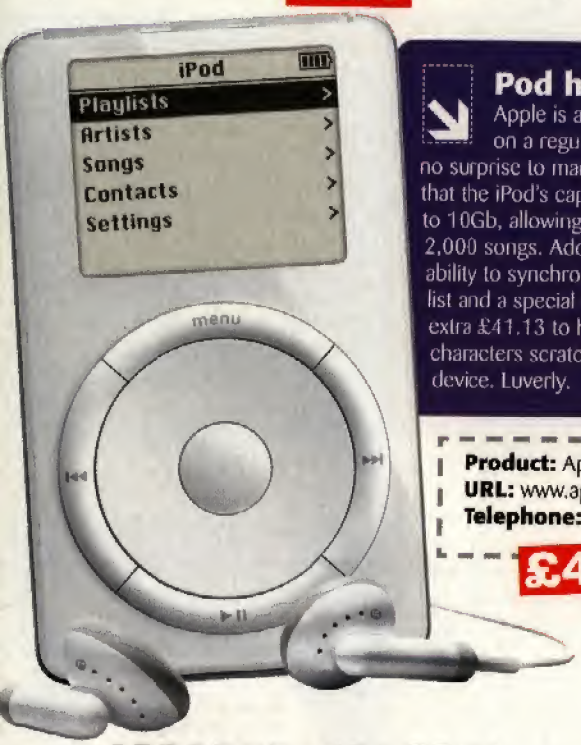
Your guide to the latest and greatest objects of desire

Master blaster

We're constantly told that the next stage of the Internet is networked household appliances, and this micro hi-fi proves that we're almost there. The main purpose of the Philips Streamium MC-i 200 is to provide broadband users with a means of accessing audio streams from a broadband connection, mainly in anticipation of a raft of new pay-per-download digital music services springing up. ADSL capabilities aside, all the usual stereo features are present, along with a CD player based on the firm's Expanium technology that can play MP3 CDs.

Product: Streamium MC-i 200
URL: www.philips.co.uk
Telephone: 020 8689 2166

TBA



Pod help us

Apple is a firm that likes to sneak out updates on a regular basis and this one will come as no surprise to many Apple watchers. The big news is that the iPod's capacity has been doubled from five to 10Gb, allowing users to now store roughly 2,000 songs. Additional tweaks include the ability to synchronise with your Mac's contact list and a special engraving option, costing an extra £41.13 to have 27 personalised characters scratched into the back of the device. Luverly.

Product: Apple 10Gb iPod
URL: www.apple.com
Telephone: 0800 039 1010

£429

Product: Sigma SD9
URL: www.sigma-photo.com
Telephone: 01707 329999

TBA

Six appeal

This new SLR camera is one of the world's first digicams capable of capturing images at six megapixels. How does it take pictures at this kind of resolution? It's got a cutting-edge microchip called the Foveon X3. Foveon claims that this chip is the first image sensor on the market capable of capturing every pixel of an image in red, blue and green light, giving it a clear advantage over other digicams. Results certainly seem to suggest added clarity and picture quality. Just watch out for that price tag – it's expected to be quite high.

Product: Olympia Soundbug
URL: www.soundbug.biz
Telephone: 01482 806688

£29.99

Bug in the bass bin

Now this really is a strange product. Dubbed the Soundbug by its makers, Olympia, the device claims it can create sound from CDs, MP3s, laptops and computer games without the need for loudspeakers or headphones. Apparently you plug the Soundbug into the headphone socket of any device, attach its sucker to a hard surface and then sit back and marvel as it generates sound from the material it is attached to. Whether this remarkable device can live up to expectations is another matter entirely. Watch this space.

Product: Trend Micro GateLock
URL: www.antivirus.com
Telephone: 01628 400500

£91.25

Locked out

This peculiar looking object bears an uncanny resemblance to the mysterious black monoliths in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and like Kubrick's extra-terrestrial blocks, it too can perform high tech commands to benefit mankind, although in not quite such a grandiose way. Essentially, the Trend Micro GateLock is an Internet security device for broadband users that sits between a computer and its ADSL connection and prevents hackers, malicious scripts and viruses from gaining access to your computer. It's available for Windows, Mac and Linux platforms.

Product: Samsung NEXiO S150
URL: www.samsungelectronics.com
Telephone: 020 8391 0168

£557.29

Handheld hero

The PDA market has been taking some dramatic leaps recently, first with the introduction of smart phones and now with the launch of Samsung's Wireless Hand PC. The concept behind this device is simple: it's a PC that you hold in your hand. What's clever is the way in which the idea is executed. NEXiO owners view the Net through a five-inch LCD screen with a native 800 x 400 display that recreates the PC desktop experience. The device is powered by the Windows CE Operating System and interfaces via a USB port.

Strike up the broadband

One of the best ways to experience broadband, particularly if you've got your own home network, is to junk the modem and opt for a router. Should this be your chosen setup, Eicon's latest offering fits the bill perfectly. The Diva 2480 is a wireless ADSL modem and comes with its own base station and PCI card. This means every PC in your home can log on without worrying about the extra cabling that comes with an ADSL connection. Laptop owners will be able to feel particularly smug as they surf from the comfort of the garden hammock.

Product: Eicon Diva 2480 wireless ADSL router
URL: www.eicon.co.uk
Telephone: 020 8967 8000

£417.13

Product: Apple Cinema HD 23-inch Flat Panel Display
URL: www.apple.com
Telephone: 0800 039 1010

£3053.83

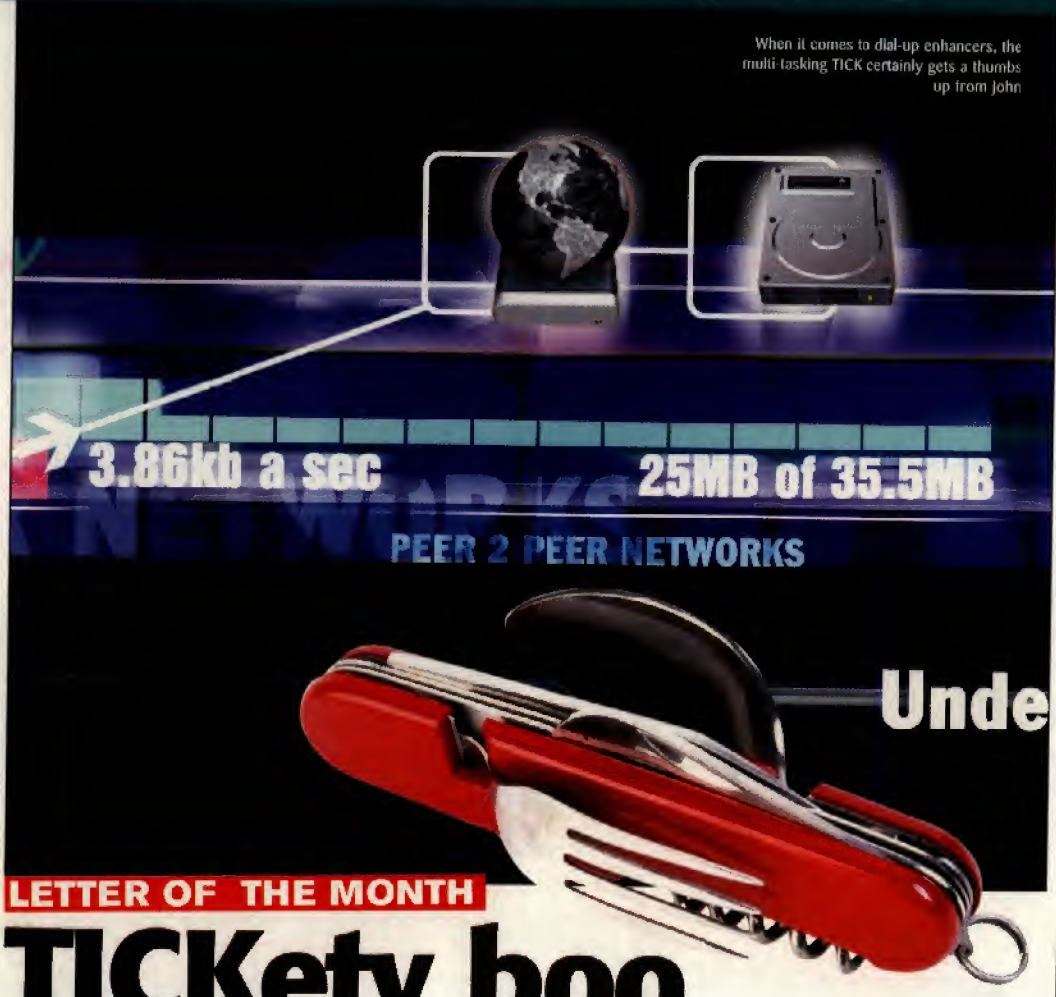
Wideboy

Another Apple product causing a stir this month is this gorgeous cinema display. This 23-inch king of monitors is the sort of thing you would normally only expect to see adorning the lounge of a goatee beard stroking interior designer or adding some cutting-edge technology to a TV advert. Capable of a staggering resolution of 1920 x 1200 pixels, this monitor is ideal for both high-end video-editing and Web design. And for once Windows followers needn't feel envious – the cinema display will work with PCs. The only question is: can you afford it?

Backchat

Email the editor at pi@paragon.co.uk

EMAIL US:
pi@paragon.co.uk
WRITE TO US:
PRACTICAL INTERNET,
PARAGON PUBLISHING,
ST PETER'S ROAD,
BOURNEMOUTH,
BH1 2JS



When it comes to dial-up enhancers, the multi-tasking TICK certainly gets a thumbs up from John

LETTER OF THE MONTH

TICKety boo

I've been a regular reader of your magazine since issue 48 and I've spent over 12 months looking for an application which would automatically load up my Firewall, WebWasher 3.0, Download Manager and Telephone Cost Monitor when I connected to the Internet, and then – when my browser disconnected – automatically shut them all down. I've tried NetRunner, NetLaunch and Net Launcher, but none did the job properly. However, I've now found something that can do it and it's freeware (not adware).

I think that this utility – TICK v1.05 – has to be the ultimate freeware dial-up enhancer for Windows and should be considered as one of the 'essential' applications on your cover CD. Not only does it do the launch/shutdown, but it can also log all Dial-Up Networking calls including length, cost of call and the amount of data transferred. I can dispense with WebCost (which I had actually paid for). It's even got all the standard BT phone tariffs built in to work out your call costs – you just click the appropriate one that you're on! If you are interested in looking at it, it can be seen at **http://software.reallyeffective.co.uk/tick_index.html**

I found it about four weeks ago, and have been so impressed with how well it works, I felt I had to tell you about it. It struck me as ideal for your typical home dial-up reader (who like me, wants their machine to work efficiently and as automated as possible). So far 13 of my friends have installed the program and are using it at my recommendation – all with no problems.

John Woolford

This program appears to have been a veritable Swiss army knife for you, John. Are you sure it doesn't include a feature for getting the stones out of horses hooves? Interestingly TICK didn't make it into our list of the best 101 Free Net programs of all time (see pages 22-32), although we may have to revise our chart in light of your glowing testimonial. We'll certainly check this program out for ourselves and if all goes to plan, we'll consider it for inclusion on our cover disc.

WIN A PRIZE

We're not easy to impress, but if you dazzle us with your cutting insights or pithy wit you stand every chance of getting your hands on a copy of Serif Web Page Maker.

This Web-authoring package, worth £39.99 certainly impressed us – we gave it four stars in a recent review. Find out more about Serif's products at **www.serif.com** or by ringing **0115 914 2000**

Never say never?

I am a big fan of *PI*, but was surprised at your response in issue 65 to a Webmaster looking for advice on making his site self-funding.

Your statement that you "never" click on banner ads was a little strange. Are you saying you would not even click on an ad of interest? It is that type of attitude that helps speed many sites like the readers who mailed in, into closing down.

Running a busy site is expensive – hosts charge big bucks for high traffic sites. My site, GhostRecon.net, gets 5,000 visitors every day, and I have had to work very hard to keep it online. Readers might like to know that banner ads alone will not support a Web site, never mind turn a profit. If the site does not have a saleable product, it's near impossible to make it self-supporting.

It's understandable that people strive to achieve a successful and popular Web site, but the Internet press is guilty of not making people aware of the financial strain of running a popular site.

Alistair

It wasn't our intention to imply that banner ads serve no purpose, merely to point out how much they can annoy people surfing the Net: people either like them or loathe them and they are never likely to be a huge revenue generator. If you want to cover the costs of your site or, shock horror, make money, then it is far better, as you so rightly point out, to have a saleable product and a clear strategy.

Arachnophobia

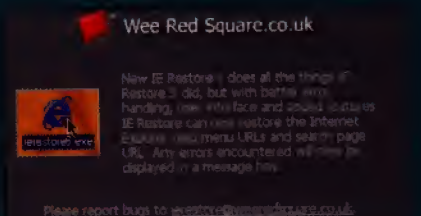
I have recently begun trying out *Practical Internet* and so far, I am impressed. However, I have to tell you that I was hesitant to buy the last two issues because of the hideous image of a spider in an advert from Clara.net on the back of the magazine. The only way I was able to keep it was by tearing the offending picture out, thereby damaging your publication and removing a significant part of the Fasthosts advertisement on the other

Reader's tip

→ Removing ISP branding

On page 67 of *PI* 65, you mentioned a way to remove ISP branding by connecting to forrestandassociates. I only managed to find an accounting firm so I went onto ZD Net and found an application called IE Restore, which is great. Get it from **www.weeredsquare.co.uk**

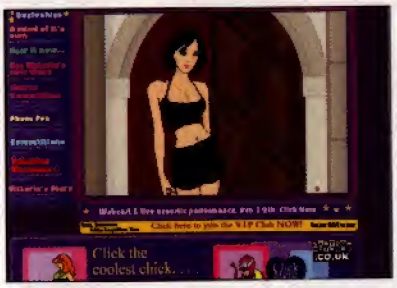
Steven



Your letters

side of the page. Most people I know are horrified by spiders and I am surprised anyone thinks they can provide suitable material for advertising. Needless to say, I will not be buying any products from Clara.net.

Tony Helmsing



Victoria Beckham's singing career may not have been up to much, but the England Captain's missus makes good use of Flash on her site

We'd hate to be accused of poking fun at your arachnophobia, Tony, but it isn't often we get letters complaining about the wildlife in adverts we carry! In defence of our eight-legged friends, it's over to *Practical's* very own Web-weaving princess Jo Cole: "Learn to love spiders, Tony, for they are interesting creatures indeed. Did you know that Funnel Web spiders can hold their breathe for up to 72 hours at one time? Also, spiders can amputate their own legs and new, shorter legs appear the next time they moult. Plus, when a tarantula is upset, it will pull hair put of its abdomen and throw it at its prey. Just like our editor. And you can't help but love him." Where do other readers stand on this arachnid argument?

Flash Harrys

Everyone knows that Macromedia makes some of the best programs for jazzing up Web sites, but has anyone ever really taken a good look at their site? Most of the pages are just straight text with text links and one small image per page – not a single bell or whistle anywhere. I really wonder whether the people at Macromedia know that all users really want are clear, concise, fast loading sites, with no bells and whistles? What are your thoughts on the matter?

David Kneafsey

There are two types of Web site. There's the corporate site where getting information quickly is essential. Then there are the show-off sites, employed by big name brands to showcase their wares. The beauty of Macromedia's products, and the reason why applications like Dreaweaver and Flash are market leaders, lies in the simple way in which they allow Webmasters to create both types of site with relative ease.

Image consultant

I've got to send my thanks to you for the free software on issue 60's CD. Image Optimiser 3.01 has changed my life! I can't believe that you can give this superb software for free. In the past I have tried to compromise quality against size of images sent via email or uploaded to my Web site and now the answer is so simple. Just use Image Optimiser. It's easy to understand, but also incredibly effective. I can reduce a photo saved as JPEG of roughly 60k down to around 25k with no noticeable reduction in quality. A page in my Web site that has several photos now loads at more than twice the speed it did previously.

Mike Boswell

Glad you enjoyed the program; look out for more great free Web-building software in future issues.

Broadband bumpkins

Having applied for ADSL back in June 2000 and having received an email from BT in October of the same year saying I would be connected by 23 December 2000, I am still waiting for a reasonable answer from them explaining what the hell is going on.

I recently heard that they had fitted the same service in a local town for just three people. I can name at least 20 people who like myself are fed up with their excuses and also live in the same village. We're at the point of complaining directly to Oftel to see what kind of response we can get there.

BT suggested to me that I should get their satellite service at a cost of £850 plus £60 per month subscription. That's all very well, but we think it's grossly over-priced.

William Gallacher

If you live in the middle of the country, ADSL could be out of reach

Sadly there's very little we can do about this. If you live in a rural area (and a fair few of us do) you've effectively been abandoned, mainly because BT and the government have been struggling for some time now to find an effective method of delivering ADSL into the countryside. All we can recommend is that you gather as many people together as possible and see if sheer weight of numbers can convince BT that the demand in your area makes it worthwhile for them to come out and upgrade your local infrastructure.

PRIZE WINNERS

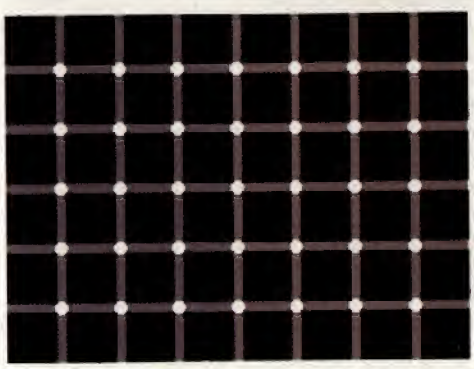
Congratulations this month go to the following people who were each successful in our FastHosts competition in *PI* 64.

1st prize: Ann Chapman from Burton-on-Trent. 15 Runners Up: Nadiah Mohamed from St Annes, Adrian Hamer from Biggleswade, Harsha West from Kenilworth, Steven Caine from Egham, Anthony Davies from Mid Glamorgan, Bernard Brown from Colchester, Philip Greenwood from Banstead, Chris Fisher from Bridgwater I. Ruttzap from Cirencester, Michael Bennett from Vale of Glamorgan, Darren Hewett from Leeds, Joan Livingston from Banbridge, Mr A V J Brassell from Guernsey, Tanya Grieveson from Northampton and Torquil Harkness from Croydon.

Attachment of the month

Thanks to Gemma Riley from Bath for sending this month's attachment. The idea appears to be to count the number of black dots in the picture. Seems easy, until you try it that is. One thing's certain: this could play havoc with your brain after a few pints of scrumpy...

If you've received a funny or quirky email attachment that you'd like to share with fellow *Practical Internet* readers send it to pi@paragon.co.uk with the subject header "Attachment of the month". We'll print the best each month for as long as we can get away with it...



Count the black dots! :o)

THE 101 BEST FREE NET PROGRAMS

THERE'S ENOUGH SOFTWARE ONLINE TO KEEP YOU DOWNLOADING FOR A LIFETIME, BUT WHICH ARE ANY GOOD? **JAMES THORNTON** AND **THOMAS WATSON** SEARCH FOR FREEWARE AND SHAREWARE NIRVANA...

There are quite literally millions of programs available for you to pick up for nowt on the Web. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these are about as useful as a radiator in the Sahara. Every now and again, though, a piece of software comes along that can revolutionise the way you use your PC.

To save you having to worry about whether your downloads will prove useful or not, we've gone to the extra special effort of compiling a rundown of the software we think constitutes the top 101 programs currently available on the Net. And before you start harping, we've only included genuine freeware or shareware here – demo versions of expensive professional packages had to be disqualified at the first hurdle.

After extensive research – in which we judged each program on its usefulness, ease of use, range of features and ability to perform – we've rated software such as browsers, Web building tools, multimedia applications and surfing aids to draw up a list of the finest 101 you can get your hands on. All of them are on the CD, too. *

Like most charts, the top 101 throws up a few surprises, as well as some obvious entries that you've almost certainly got already. We guarantee that you'll find the list to be an essential guide to beefing up your Net experience, which you can refer back to time and time again. Eyes down for the *Practical Internet* Top 101 – where will your favourite program appear?

Practical Internet IT'S ON THE CD

101 RealPlayer 8 Basic

www.real.com

While many people still persist in using RealPlayer as their first choice media player, the fundamental flaws of the program mean that the file format is fairly ropey and you have to suffer an onslaught of ads. Having said this, the player is essential for streaming certain types of media online.

100 emageX 2.0

www.innomage.com

Sparing you endless, mind-numbing hours spent grabbing images from the Web, emageX allows you to extract, display, modify, save and print pictures with the mere click of a mouse. It's one of the only programs that will let you harvest all the pictures from a site at once.

99 Submitta 2.1

www.submitta.com

Perhaps the most customisable search engine submission tool around, Submitta allows you to import and submit complete Web sites to over 800 different online search resources. It also makes it easy to see how you're performing with statistics and rankings.

98 HTML Optimizer

www.tonbrand.nl

Decent site building tools really don't come along that often if you're a Mac user, but this utility lets you streamline your site with consummate ease. As well as providing tools for optimising your text and graphic files, it also checks pages for any broken links and hanging tags.

97 SmartButler 1.11

www.smart-butler.com

Serving up a generous helping of fun and practically, SmartButler lets you relieve some strain from your bleary eyes by reading out your instant messages for you. What's more, you can even tailor the software to read messages in a certain voice depending on who the IM is from.

96 DivX Video Bundle 5.0

www.divx.com

DivX is one of the most hip and happening video formats of the moment, and there are few programs as good as this one for working with the format. With enhanced video quality and effective compression capabilities, the software lets you create and watch DivX videos in style.

95 Connection Keeper 5

www.gammadyne.com

While the popularity of unmetered Internet access is constantly growing, the one thing that still manages to rile users is automatic cut-offs. This cunning piece of kit lets you keep that connection alive and can even dial back in without your intervention.

94 Eyeball Chat 2.0

www.eyeball.com

Unless you've got a face like a moose, Eyeball Chat makes for a

* Unfortunately three of the programs here had to be omitted from the cover disc at the last moment due to licensing problems

TOP TEN

Multimedia programs

MP3 JUNKIES WILL be pleased to hear that every one of the top ten multimedia utilities includes support for the format. Overall winner, Winamp, is without doubt the finest free player you'll find, while CDex scores highly, as our all-time favourite ripper. If you're a Mac user then look no further than the gorgeous iTunes to turn your sonic dreams into a reality.

1. Winamp 2.78

Skinnable, plug-inable, and downright kissable, Winamp is, in our opinion, light years above any other audio player you'll come across. With support for a range of popular formats, remarkably the program is just 1.1Mb so you're going to need a damn good excuse not to have this one.

2. CDex

King of the rippers, CDex is the best piece of kit for transforming your CDs into neat digital music files which you can then take anywhere, share online with friends or, controversially, just listen to.

3. iTunes

When Apple sets out to make a program, it usually makes a pretty good job of it and its first foray into the world of MP3 can only be described as a stroke of genius.

4. Spinner

Perfect for fans of marginalised music genres as well as teeny pop followers, Spinner serves up an unprecedented range of over 140 Net radio channels.

5. QuickTime 5

Available for both PC and Mac users, QuickTime is a very stylish media player with its own, successful multimedia format. *Note: not on the CD.*

BEST OF THE REST

6. Sonique
7. StreamRipper
8. Liquid Player
9. Audacity
10. TagScanner

fantastic improvement on your regular, run of the mill chatting experience. By rigging up your Webcam and putting the program into action, you can easily join in a video-linked chat sessions with other users.

93 FreeDVD 2.0

N/A

With VHS now slowly dying a death, DVD is the smarter way to enjoy video these days. The FreeDVD player is arguably the best for handling the medium as it allows you to play discs either in a small window or in full screen mode on your PC.

92 CleanDisk 2.6

www.fmjsoft.com

Providing you with the ability to locate and remove unwanted junk files from your PC in just three steps, CleanDisk is one of the most simple to use tools for wiping out log files, Internet cache and history files, freeing up valuable resources for you.

91 Object Bar 1.0

www.stardock.com

Imagine being able to take the best bits from any operating system and mix them all together to create a completely new interface. This killer application uniquely lets you transform Windows 98/ME's Start bar to look and function exactly like Windows XP or even MacOS X's Finder.

90 HideWin 1.0

N/A

There are times when it's vital that you shut down a browser window as quickly as you can and this program lets you do this in a flash. The beauty of HideWin is that you can define your own hotkey, and the program is only 32Kb in size.

89 QuickSMS

www.desktop-publications.com

With the whole country going absolutely berserk for text messaging, this is the perfect utility for sending free SMS messages to anyone in the world via the Net. The program is quick and easy to use and, most importantly, you don't have to pay a penny.

88 Applet Marquee Wizard 3.5

www.coffeecup.com

Marking the first of three top 100 entries for CoffeeCup software, Applet Marquee Wizard allows even the most dim-witted of Web developers to create smooth-scrolling Java banners. Best of all, each banner is customisable in terms of font, scrolling direction and colours.

87 HVS Animator 1.0.2

www.digfrontier.com

Practically the only GIF animator that you don't need to pay for, HVS lets you knock together decent animations from single-frame GIFs and comes stocked with controls for adding, deleting and reordering frames. A fantastic tool for livening up dull pages.

86 Offline Commander 1.5

www.zylox.com

Truly the greatest offline browser we've ever clapped eyes on, Offline Commander lets you download and organise pages from the Web for viewing offline. Without plastering you with spyware, the offline search engine is blisteringly quick allowing you to search downloaded pages by keyword.

85 iCab 2.7.1

www.icab.de

This ultra-streamlined software provides a rare treat for Mac users everywhere – a stable browser that runs as quick as a flash and requires very little system memory. While there are some stumbling blocks when handling sites that →

TOP TEN Web development tools

AFTER MUCH DELIBERATION, CoffeeCup's free HTML editor got the nod in the battle of the Web building utilities. Ideal for both beginners and seasoned pros, the software gives you all the help you need to produce lively pages at a canter. Other prominent entries in the top ten include the drag-and-drop file transfer classic WS_FTP and the excellent, though bizarrely named, GIMP.

1. CoffeeCup Free HTML

Picking up a text editor and suddenly churning out reams of HTML is not exactly child's play, but this free application gives you a guiding nudge along the way to Web wonderment. With a stack of preloaded HTML and DHTML templates as well as a series of wizards, you'll never find a better tool for the job.

2. WS_FTP LE

There was a time when uploading files to the Web was about as easy as milking a rhino, however these days have gone thanks to intuitive FTP suites like this fine specimen.

3. The GIMP

The GIMP is the crème de la crème of free imaging tools, and offers an unparalleled range of features for something so darn free.

4. Irfanview

Following hotly on the heels of its gimpy rival, Irfanview lets any budding Web builder or digital photographer effortlessly prime their images with professional results.

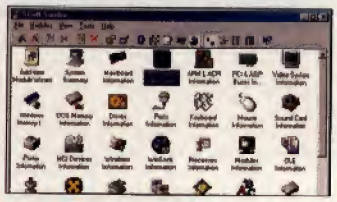
5. Graphic Converter 4.3

The best budget image editor available for the Mac by some stretch, Graphic Converter delivers a simple yet mightily powerful set of features.

BEST OF THE REST

6. FTP Voyager
7. 1st Page 2002 2.0
8. 20/20 2.2
9. Arachnophilia 4.0
10. AI Picture Utility 6.0

→ use complicated HTML coding, iCab is absolutely perfect for Mac surfers who want to whiz there way through the Web.



84 SANDRA Standard 8.1

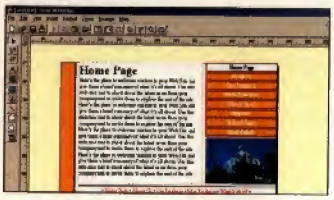
www.3bsoftware.com

Who the hell is SANDRA? It's actually an acronym for System Analyser Diagnostic and Reporting Assistant, which kind of lets you know what this bundle of joy does for you. The sort of thing you'd normally have to pay around £40 for, SANDRA contains some 50 'modules' to tune up and maintain your Windows PC to the max.

83 Movie XOne

www.aist.com/products/moviexone

As of yet, this is the only totally free movie editor we've seen. Edit your movie clips, add video effects and generally get into the world of video editing without shelling out any dosh. Movie XOne is surprisingly easy to use, as well.



82 Free WebPlus 1.0

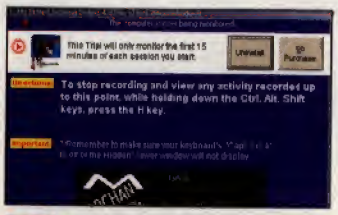
www.serif.com

We know loads of you don't have the time or desire to create your own Web pages from scratch, which is why Free WebPlus 1.0 is such a boon. Featuring simple template-driven Web creation, this really is Web pages made easy. There are even logo creation and animated GIF wizards to give your site a kick up the backside.

81 Browser Pro 1.0

www.browserpro.com

Checking out news sites often leaves you drowning in a sea of unwanted information. Browser Pro gives you the main sections of popular pages, including headlines, pictures and content. What you won't see is banner ads and undesirable menus cropping up. In essence, Browser Pro cuts out the crap, which can't be bad.



80 Is My Mate Cheating Online 2.0

www.marchan.iwarp.com

This stealth software lets you keep tabs on everything that happens on your PC, even when you're not there. This lets you check up on friends and family to make sure they haven't been up to anything dodgy. More than anything, though, we love this program for the fantastic name.

79 Tinker Tool 2.0.1

www.bresink.de/osx/tinkertool.html

Got a Mac? Not feeling smug enough about OS X's superiority over Windows XP? Well, get a load of this baby, which lets you tweak loads of hidden settings to fine-tune the Operating System even more. Get ready for the finest-looking computing experience possible.

78 WeMedia Talking Browser 1.0

www.wemedia.com

Talking browsers are the future, and WeMedia gives you a nice view into how you might be viewing Web sites in coming years. It's not perfect, hence the low-ish position in the chart, but WeMedia is worth checking out for its non-reliance on Internet Explorer.

77 GetRight 4.5c

www.getright.com

You need a download manager, pure and simple. GetRight isn't the best out there, but it promises to let you schedule, organise and generally make your downloading life a hell of a lot easier. We're big fans of the 'download history' feature round these parts.

76 Shockwave/ Flash Player

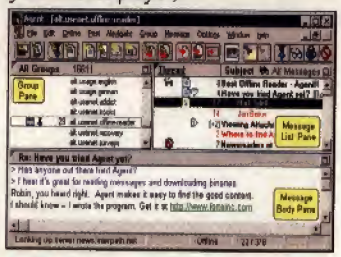
www.macromedia.com

Flash is still the best way for Web gurus to place rich multimedia content on their site, which makes a Flash Player essential for you. The player doesn't do much, other than play Flash files, but you'll quickly notice how flat the Web looked without it.

75 TagScanner 4.5

http://xdev.narod.ru

If you've been using the Net properly over the past couple of years, you should have thousands of MP3s on your hard drive now. TagScanner is a great little utility for renaming the IDE tags on your MP3s (the song title displayed in your media player).



74 Free Agent 1.21

www.forteinc.com/agent/index.php

After a spell in the doldrums, newsgroups are gaining a bit of a following again. Free Agent 1.21 lets you check out all of the newsgroup action you could ever need, including those all-important binary file groups.

73 Cache Decimator 3.0

http://members.aol.com/gluetube149

We've all, ahem, stumbled on sites that we'd rather no-one else knew about. Cache Decimator is here to rescue you, erasing all the browsing evidence that might otherwise give you away. Weighing in at only 36Kb, it doesn't even have an interface to speak of, but still covers your tracks like the best private detective.

72 AI Picture Utility 6.0

http://members.aol.com/aipict

With more pictures on the Internet than you could possibly look at, even if you had 20 pairs of eyes, a specific viewer could do you a turn. AI Picture Utility lets you create slideshows, and a whole lot more. Most importantly of all, you can also tweak your pictures with this

handy utility, with some nice colour and sizing options.

71 RAMbooster 1.6

www.sci-fi/~borg/rambooster/index.htm

Hands up who'd like more RAM. Everyone? We thought so. RAMbooster makes more effective use of the RAM that's currently on your PC than Windows ever could. The result is that you'll find programs opening quicker, Web pages loading faster, and your whole computing experience a much happier one.

70 JoMail 2.7

www.jomail.net

This clever, time-saving piece of wizardry lets you check your Web-based email without having to go to the site. It's easy to set up multiple accounts and you can save cash by reading and writing messages without having to go online.

69 StartPage Guard 1.2

www.pjwalczak.com

This gem of a program is rather like the *Mighty Mouse* of Internet programs. It's small and barely noticeable until called into action, when it will stamp out the annoying problem of Start Page hijacking swiftly and without intervention.

68 Arachnophilia 4.0

www.arachnoid.com

HTML editing at its finest, Arachnophilia lets you put pages together with consummate ease through its well-organised interface. You can insert common tags at the click of a button and there's a built-in collection of really useful tutorials for coding newcomers.

67 Easy Password Manager 1.17

www.passwordmanager.co.uk

Trying to remember all of the passwords you set up for the sites you use can be a major pain, but this program lets you easily store them all in a convenient, secure location. What's more, the software contains an online form-filler as an added bonus.

66 Alligator 1.32

www.nearsoftware.com

This is a download manager with a difference, as it includes integration with your browser for a more natural, streamlined downloading experience. Even though the file size is very small, the software still packs in features such as drag-and-drop support, FTP searching and a file launcher.

65 CUseeMe 5.0

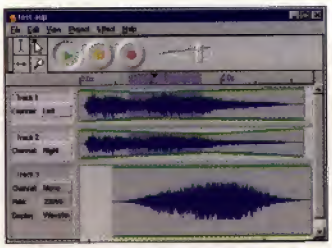
www.cuseemeworld.com

We really like this program not only because it's nearly got the same title as one of our favourite Lionel Ritchie songs, but because it allows users to conduct videoconferencing over the Internet easily and with style. While so many other programs fall by the wayside, CUseeMe always delivers first-rate picture quality and the interface is highly configurable.

64 Morpheus

www.musiccity.com

The most celebrated file-sharing client of its generation, Morpheus would have appeared much higher on the chart were it not for its recent changes which means it now utilises the less user friendly Gnutella network. Nevertheless, still a classic.



63 Audacity 0.98

http://audacity.sourceforge.net

Perhaps the cheapest way for music connoisseurs to tinker with MP3 tracks, Audacity allows songs to be cut, mixed or treated to a variety of effects such as Bass Boost, Wahwah and noise removal. A must for cleaning up dodgy CD rips or poor quality MP3s.

62 20/20

www.hotfreeware.com

Free image editors aren't exactly ten a penny so it's very rare to find one with the sheer range of features stuffed into 20/20. The program lets you perform everything you'd expect such as cropping, resizing, and converting as well as boasting a number of filters and effects.

61 Chameleon 1.1

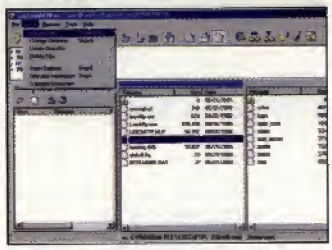
N/A

There aren't a great deal of file encryption utilities that you can pick up for nothing, but this one does the job admirably. Chameleon lets you easily encrypt files to keep sensitive information away from prying eyes over the Net.

60 K-Meleon 0.6

http://kmeleon.sourceforge.net

If you find yourself in a hurry and need to manoeuvre through the Web as fast as possible, then the bizarrely-named K-Meleon is your saviour. It may not have much in the way of extra features, but that doesn't detract from it being one of the quickest browsers we have ever come across.



59 Leech FTP

http://stud.fh-heilbronn.de/~jdebis/leechftp

This cunning piece of software lets you suck files from Web sites in the quickest way possible. Leech saves you from clicking each particular download link in a site by recognising and placing each in a Job Queue. Once here, they can then be systematically transferred to your PC.

58 Crime Catcher 1.0

www.new-software.co.uk

Installing a surveillance system for your home could cost thousands. Or, you could always do it for nothing by installing Crime Catcher and setting up your Webcam as a security camera. The motion detection system is first-rate and is fully configurable so you can tweak the sensitivity.

57 FastNet Connection Accelerator ME 1.6

N/A

Out of all the various modem tweakers on the go, few can be as easy to use as FastNet. You simply launch the program, choose your connection type and FastNet will jimmy with your settings, giving you a significantly noticeable burst of speed. Hoorah.

→

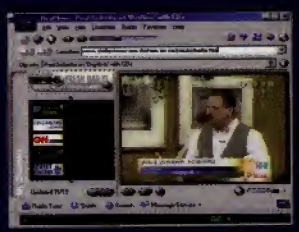
Where the hell is...?

SOME OF THE PROGRAMS THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT

COMPILING A LIST of top 101 programs inevitably means that some high profile utilities miss out. Here's a sneaky peek at some of the big boys who failed to make it, and why.

Windows Media Player

Having been bundled with new PCs since the dawn of time, Windows Media Player isn't really a downloadable program. Granted, you can pick up a later version, but most people tend to stick to what they've been given.



RealPlayer

Okay, RealPlayer squeezed in to the chart (just), but the fact that it only managed to sneak into last place says a lot. To be honest with you, we're still amazed that anyone uses this bloated, spyware tastic application for anything other than streaming media .

Paint Shop Pro 7

Although it's long been the image editor of choice for the more savvy out there, Paint Shop Pro was a total non-starter for one simple reason – it's not free. While we sneaked a few shareware goodies into the chart, we simply couldn't consider trialware.

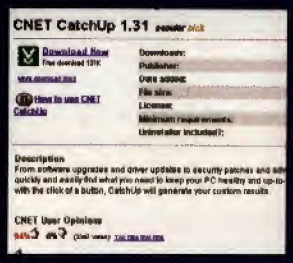
Keep Software up-to-date

AFTER BUILDING UP the dream system, complete with the very best free software on the go, you might as well maintain your collection to keep on top of developments. In essence, this means you're going to have to keep your programs as relevant and up-to date as possible. But how do you do this?

There are several options available to ensure you don't fall behind the software juggernaut. The first is to simply register your freeware program – enter your email address in the space provided, and you're there. While this tends to produce more junk mail than a binman could cope with, the benefits are worth it. Every time an update is released, you'll be told, and encouraged to download the new version. Try to register with a Webmail account, though, or else you'll find your email client struggling to cope with more spam than a Monty Python convention.

If you prefer the more pro-active, or work intensive, route then you could always visit download sites regularly on the scour for a new version of a loved program. If it's a big program, like WinAmp, you'll find that download.com and the like feature it heavily – making it easy to spot a new version. Hell, if you only use a few programs, you can even visit individual software sites for updates.

While we're on the subject of download.com, it's worth checking out the 'CatchUp' feature on this site. This small download basically takes a butcher's at your system, and tells you which programs need to be updated sharpish.



The lovely download.com comes to the rescue with its CatchUp feature

56 Ad-aware 5.62

www.lavasoft.de

There can be few things in life more intrusive than adware, spyware and the like. Rather like a burly nightclub bouncer, Ad-aware comprehensively performs the job of turfing out any of this unscrupulous, activity-tracking programs from your machine.

55 1st Page 2000 2.0

www.evrsoft.com

Web page creation tools are notoriously expensive, which is why we love a freebie when we see one. This package has all you need to enter HTML heaven, including some top-notch image sizing and JavaScript functions.

54 WinMX 2.6

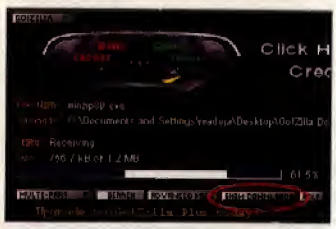
www.winmx.com

The second file-sharing client to feature on our list uses the Napster and OpenNap servers. This produces one simple effect – you get better, more comprehensive search results, because there are more users to call upon, and plunder from.

53 MSN Messenger 4.6 (not on the CD)

www.microsoft.com

Want to chat, but don't want to mess about creating user names and stuff? MSN Messenger lets you integrate seamlessly with your Hotmail account, and ties in rather nicely to the Windows system. Heck, it even comes as part of Windows XP.



52 GoZilla Free 4.1

www.gozilla.com

GoZilla used to be the top download manager by a mile. None come close to the range of features and functions offered by this staggeringly comprehensive suite. Unfortunately, version 4.1 tries to cram a little too much in, with the consequence of it ending up being far too complicated and fiddly for beginners.

51 iMesh 3.1

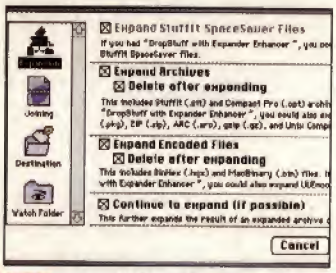
www.imesh.com

With some seven million users worldwide, iMesh has a lot of punters for you to share files with. This latest version of the program features a radically simplified interface, and a handy 'speed up download' function for, er, speeding up downloads.

50 Liquid Player Six 6.1

www.liquidaudio.com

More of a suite than a media player, this handsome beast lets you stream, download rip and burn to CD. A jack of all trades; don't fool yourself into thinking that no facet goes unmastered in this collection of utilities.



49 Stuffit Expander

www.aladdinsys.com

What WinZip does for the PC, Stuffit Expander does for the Mac. This essential tool basically allows you to open up compressed folders, giving you access to the hidden gems held within. Considering most downloads are stuffed in some way, Mac users need this program quite a lot.

48 Boss Key 1.0

www.dreamedia.co.uk

Boss Key might be a one-trick pony, but what a great trick to have up your sleeve. With this tool, you can minimise all Internet Explorer windows with the press of a special hot key. See how useful this is the next time your ma comes in when you're watching Jordan give birth.

47 Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.05

www.adobe.com

The only real way to distribute decent formatted text and images (the way you'd see them in a mag like this one) is to store them on the Web as PDF files. These Acrobat files can only be viewed by, you guessed it, Acrobat Reader. It's dull, but you need it.

46 Girafa 2.08

www.girafa.com

Give your searches a shot in the arm with this oddly-named tool, which displays your search results as a series of thumbnails. Eliminate the spectre of dead links once and for all, and spend the time you've saved on something more interesting instead – like doing more searches.

45 StreamRipper32 2.4a

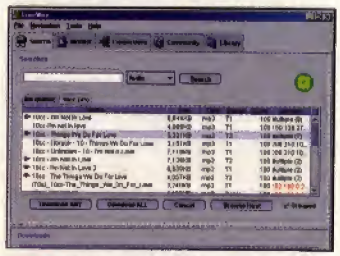
http://streamripper.sourceforge.net

Streaming audio is all well and good, but we like to have music stored on our hard drive. This handy tool lets you turn those audio streams into MP3s, including Shoutcast Internet radio broadcasts. A host of options ensures you only save what you want, as well.

44 Offline Explorer Pro 2.1.754

www.metaproducts.com

Set this creature up to do its thang, go off for a day's shopping at the garden centre and, when you come back, hey presto – up to 500 sites of your choice stored on your hard drive, ready for as much offline browsing as you wish to do.



43 LimeWire

www.limewire.com 2.3.1

Making full use of the Gnutella network, LimeWire brings a myriad

of files to your doorstep via its ingenious array of servers. As is often the case nowadays, you're not limited to MP3s, and can get your greedy hands on just about anything you want.

42 Sonique 1.95

www.sonique.com

This devilishly attractive MP3 player packs everything you need for the full listening experience, including visualisations and skins aplenty. A resource-hogging tendency and desire to crash at the most inappropriate times prevented this choons player from rising further up the chart.

41 Netscape 6.2

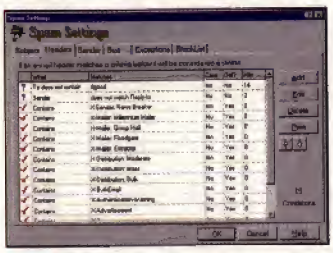
www.netscape.com

The main challenger to IE6's crown, Netscape 6 was plagued by bugs on first release. This update fixes many of the problems, but many people feel that this browser is just too bloated to be of use. It looks bloody great, though.

40 WebFerret 4.0

www.ferretsoft.com

A real must-have piece of software for anyone that uses the Web for research, WebFerret is one of the easiest ways to query multiple search engines at once. You have a good deal of control over your searches, and the tool will deliver an unlimited number of results.



39 Spam Buster 1.9

www.contactplus.com

Arguably the greatest spam-quashing utility on the planet, Spam Buster contains a massive list of over 15,000 known spam addresses. The beauty of the program is that it lets you set up rules for the header, and the From and Subject lines to stamp out junk mail.

38 AOL Instant Messenger

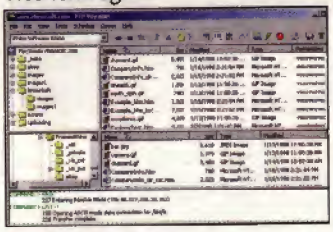
www.aol.com

Though without quite the same level of knobs and whistles as Yahoo! Messenger, AOL's offering is still one of our most treasured messengers. Communication tools should above anything, let you chat quickly and easily without a lot of fuss, a trait which certainly applies to AIM.

37 AI Roboform

www.roboform.com

A simple program that performs a simple task to save you hours of hassle, AI Roboform is the best online form filler we've seen. The wizard makes it easy to insert all your details into the program, then you need never tap out another Web form again.



36 FTP Voyager

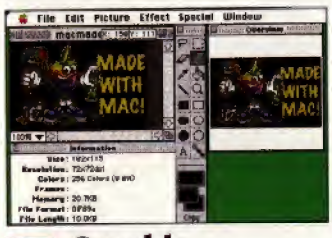
www.rhinosoft.com

Thanks to its familiar Windows Explorer-style interface and drag-and-drop support, this FTP client is a doddle to operate whether you're a novice or a professional file hunter. Useful features of the program include scheduling, synchronisation and a rather smart site manager to boot.

35 QuickTime 5 (not on the CD)

www.apple.com

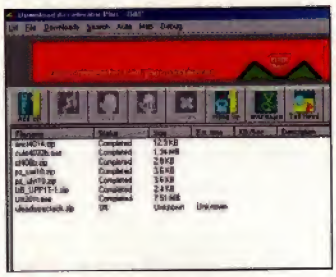
QuickTime is a comprehensive multimedia system allowing you to access a world of images, movies, interactive VR and moveable objects. While it doesn't support Windows Media or RealMedia formats, at least it doesn't bombard you with ads.



34 Graphic Converter 4.3

www.lemkesoft.de

The Daddy of budget imaging tools for the Mac, Graphic Converter lets you get your images ship shape and ready for the Web. With support for dozens of file formats, a powerful set of editing tools and compatibility with Photoshop plug-ins, Apple users will shun this at their peril.



33 Download Accelerator 5

www.speedbit.com

This no-nonsense download manager is probably the most well-equipped to send your transfers hurtling into top gear. Download Accelerator features multi-server connections to give you the best possible download performance and is also capable of recovering from lost connections.

32 StartSurfing 1.0

www.startsurfing.com

If you want a program that's going to remove all the most annoying elements of the Web from your browsing, you shouldn't look any further than this program. StartSurfing prevents pop-ups and browser re-sizing, stops ads from auto-refreshing, disables music, and much more.

31 Star Downloader 1.2

http://stardownloader.com

The highest-ranking download accelerator in our list, Star Downloader gives all of your file transfers a hefty kick up the rear by splitting them into several smaller parts and downloading each at the same time. It manages to gain the edge over its rivals as there's not a shred of advertising or spyware to be seen anywhere.

30 Internet Explorer Eye Spy

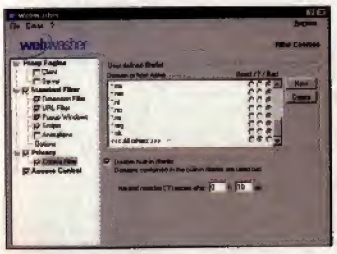
N/A

Not that we advocate underhanded tactics, but this utility is great for anonymously monitoring Net activity if you suspect someone is up to no good on your machine. What's more, the program can be password-protected and is impossible to shutdown using the Ctrl-Alt-Del command.

29 Kaleidoscope 2.3.1

N/A

This vastly popular program is great for making your Mac look even cooler than normal by giving the desktop a complete makeover. With the choice of thousands of different designs, Kaleidoscope can change every aspect of the Mac interface including windows, scroll bars, menus and buttons.



28 WebWasher 2.21

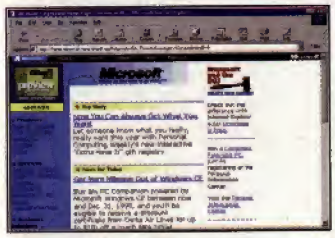
www.webwasher.com

If, like us, you are narked off by the amount of adverts that creep onto your machine when you download programs from the Web, this is the best alternative to giving up on downloads altogether. Put WebWasher into action and watch ads do a disappearing act to rival Debbie McGee.

27 Aladdin DropStuff

www.aladdinsys.com

An essential utensil for any Mac user's toolkit, Aladdin DropStuff is the simplest way to compress files on a Macintosh. Great for sending files via email or just freeing up disk space, DropStuff can compress a file in self-extracting format, or an even smaller one that can be opened with StuffIt Expander.



26 IE6/Outlook Express

www.microsoft.com

You may be surprised that IE6 fails to scrape into the top 20, but we reckon there are better Web browsers than Microsoft's ever-popular offering. Plus, as it comes free with pretty much any PC you'll buy, it doesn't need the publicity anyway. Don't get us wrong though, it's still a nice way to look at the Web.

→

TOP FIVE Worst programs... EVER!

1. DanceForce
It's a WinAmp visualisation, which surely can't be bad? Well, it can be when it features explicit instructions to put a glove puppet on your joystick to make it dance in front of your monitor. Bizarre.

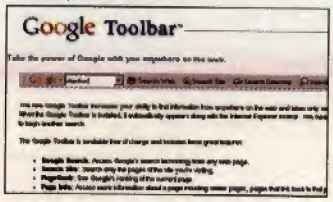
2. DaterFile 2.0
Online chatting and dating has caught on big time in recent years. This utility lets 'socially inpaired' punters catalogue the people they've sent emails to, and which dating sites they've paid up to. If you fall into the 'no life' category already, this will help you slide further down the mire.

3. Project A.R.S.E
"I've got this great concept for a program. We create this supposed artificial intelligence unit, and get people to ask questions in a simple interface. Then, no matter what questions the person asks, our chat robot replies with complete gibberish. Ha ha ha, that will be hilarious." Arse, indeed.

4. MP3 Dancer
Just when you thought that your MP3 listening couldn't get any better, along comes this 'interesting' concept. Inspired by the 'VirtuaGirl' series of stripping desktop beauties, this program gives you a collection of dancers who jive, jig and jump around to the music booming out of your speakers. Particularly hated by our Technical Editor, who rather foolishly shelled out a tenner of his hard-earned cash for extra dancing privileges.

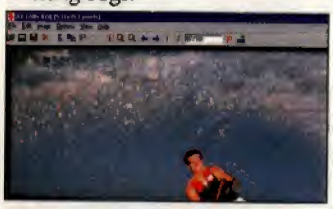
5. PowerAdvisory 1.0.5
The Net is a great place, filled to the brim with essential information. It's also got more crap on it than any other medium the world has ever seen. This program here is an absolute must for anyone keen on keeping an eye on power in the California area. What, you mean you don't want to know about the Californian power grid? You're just weird.

25 MAME Emulator
www.mame.net
Forget about getting more from your Net connection and the like. Drop out with this arcade emulator, and play the coin-ops of your past, exactly as they appeared first time out. We dare you to give Track & Field a shot and not become instantly addicted.



24 Google Toolbar
www.google.com (not on CD)
Google is by far the best search engine in the world, and this handy browser add-on saves you having to visit the site every time you want to find something on the Net. Don't be a fool. Just bow down to the superiority of Google, and get this toolbar pronto.

23 VCatch Virus Catcher 3.8.0.6
www.vcatch.com
Virus checkers are notoriously expensive things, so a free option shines out like a beacon. This superb tool checks every file that enters your system from the Web or email, limiting your chances of being laid low by one of those irritating bugs.

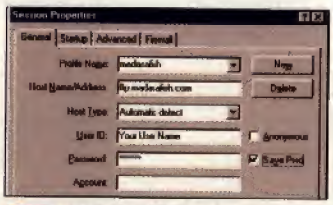


22 Irfan View 3.61
www.irfanview.com
This image viewer-cum-editor contains all of the basic tools you really need to turn your ramshackle collection of pictures into a perfectly-formed slideshow of cropped shots. No other image viewer comes close to the drag-and-drop ease offered here.

21 Xteq X-Setup 6.1
www.xteq.com
This wizard-based utility lets you alter many of the hidden settings of Windows that define the way the Operating System works. Tweaks abound, with hundreds of options for you to fiddle with. Few people are perfectly happy with Windows, so this should be on your PC.

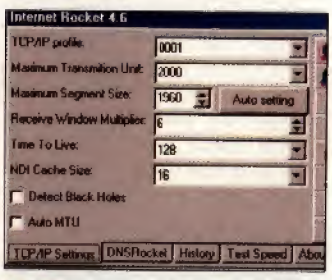
20 Trillian 0.725
www.ceruleanstudios.com
Fully 'skinnable', this chat client lets you get rid of all your other instant messengers. Basically, Trillian will house all of the accounts you've built up from different services – in one handy interface. It looks better than any other messenger as well.

19 The GIMP
www.gimp.org
You know you're onto a winner when you find a graphics program called the GIMP. The GNU Image Manipulation Program is actually a very good facsimile of Photoshop, with similar features and functions. The main difference is cost – this is totally free.



18 WS_FTP LE
www.ipswitch.com
Our favourite FTP client, this is all you need to transfer the hard graft of your site onto the Web. Incredibly easy to use, we prefer this freebie version to the Pro edition thanks mainly to its much simpler interface.

17 Spinner Plus 4.0
www.spinner.com
Internet radio never quite caught on as much as it could have, but this is the best exponent of the medium so far. Enter your musical preferences, and Spinner will create your very own radio station for you, playing only the music you like.



16 Internet Rocket 4.65
www.roadside-software.com
Modem boosters crop up all over the place, but this is our current fave. Apart from anything else, it works on any connection you choose to configure, meaning everyone from 28.8k dial-up users to ADSL speedsters can pick up speed from this utility.

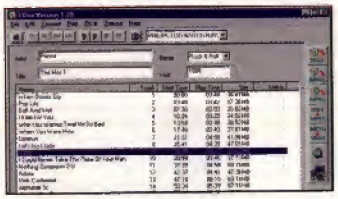
15 TweakIE
www.tweakie.com
Unless you enjoy slow-loading Web pages and a generally unfit browser, this is a program you need. With more Internet Explorer tweaks and functions than you could shake a big stick at, this is the program to make your browser a true contender again.

14 Copernic 2001 5.02
www.copernic.com
For relief of searching stress, suffered by Internet users the world over, you should really prescribe yourself a dose of Copernic. This multi-faceted tool turns simple searches into full-blown site hunts, and usually comes up with the goods.

13 iTunes
www.apple.com/itunes
It looks beautiful, and integrates seamlessly into OS X, but iTunes is much more than a pretty face. Tremendous playlist control and a built-in MP3 ripper mean that there's simply nothing better for the Mac muso.

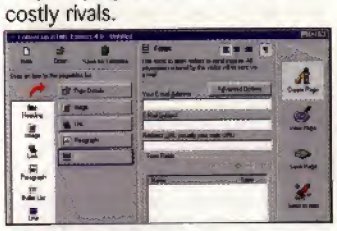
12 WinZip 8.1
www.winzip.com
Stored securely in the 'essential' folder, WinZip is a must for anyone wishing to download stuff from the Net. Apart from its ability to open compressed folders, you can also create your own archives from scratch with this fully-featured gem.

11 NeoPlanet
www.neoplanet.com
Internet Explorer is notoriously one-dimensional in its display options. NeoPlanet gives you that added edge by completely transforming the interface of IE, and giving you access to thousands of skins. You can even create your own skin, if you're brave enough.



10 CDex 1.30
www.cdex.n3.net

Great for keeping up with the music-obsessed youth of today, CDex is the best way of converting all your music to the digital format of the moment for nothing. The software is a cinch to use and can rip audio CDs directly to MP3 or WAV format with the minimum amount of bother. Unlike most other freeware encoders, CDex rarely crashes and comes with a number of intelligent features such as CDDB integration, for quickly applying track names to your songs, and a neat split track option. Above all, the sonic quality of the rips is second to none, even when it's put up against CDex's more costly rivals.

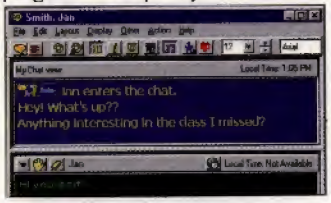


9 CoffeeCup Free HTML
www.coffeecup.com

Editing HTML is never going to be the most exhilarating experience you'll ever have, but this editor makes the process of coding a site an absolute dream. Ideal for newcomers to the code, CoffeeCup Free HTML lays out everything you need in an easy-to-reach fashion. The software comes with seven pre-installed HTML templates along with the option to create your own templates. It also boasts wizards for pepping up your site with links, meta tags, colours and fonts. You get a collection of 35 background images, 60 button and bullet images and 60 Web themes. Not bad for a program that doesn't cost you a sausage.

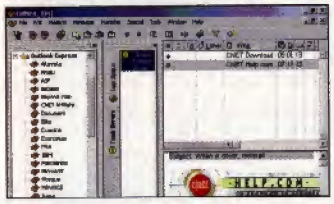
8 ZoneAlarm 2.6.362
www.zonelabs.com

As the top security utility in our chart, ZoneAlarm really delivers when it comes to keeping slimy hackers and chancers from the gates of your PC. The beauty of this Firewall lies in its simplicity, as it can be configured with your email client and Web browser through a series of wizards. Then, if an unknown source attempts to connect to your machine, a pop-up window will spring into action and alert you to decide whether or not you want to grant access. You might think protection like this would come at a price, but aside from having to suffer occasional ads, the program is completely free.



7 ICQ 2001b
http://web.icq.com

This awesome instant messaging and file-sharing goliath is widely recognised as the most downloaded program of all time. The principle of the software is straightforward enough, allowing you to rendezvous in real-time with friends online simply by entering their ICQ number, name or email address before tapping out your musings to each other. However, in reality, ICQ is much more highly evolved these days, allowing you to indulge in voice chatting, videoconferencing and game playing. Its key advantage over other instant messaging clients is in the sheer weight of subscribers that use the service.



6 Eudora 5.1
www.eudora.com

Just missing out on a top five placing, Eudora still manages to finish up as the top email client in our list, knocking the socks off its popular, but buggy rival; Outlook Express. Without overdoing it, Eudora manages to serve up a range of decent, practical features that allow you to control your mail without having to faff about for ages. These include multiple address book formatting options, plus the ability to filter, redirect and forward mail at your own convenience. Other 'fun' additions to the program include a filter that speaks the name and subject of your new messages, and a 'chillies' rating system that scans incoming mail for offensive language.

5 AudioGalaxy Satellite 0.609
www.audiogalaxy.com

Giving you free access to arguably the largest collection of music on the planet, AudioGalaxy is worshiped by MP3 collectors everywhere, not least the *Practical Internet* team. Searching for audio is so simple and the software ensures you're running at the fastest possible transfer rate by selecting the closest user with the file you need. More efficient than the fondly remembered Napster, you can even select files for download that are currently offline to be retrieved when the person who hosts the song comes online. Without all the twiddly extras such as chat rooms and forums that many other P2P clients include, the small and anonymous Audiogalaxy is file sharing in its purest form. →

Have your say?

AFTER RUNNING THE rule over our most treasured software of all time, and generally acting all high and mighty, we'd like to invite you to comment on our choices for the top 101. Do you agree with the order we've ranked the programs or reckon that we've lost the plot? Which programs can't you live without that didn't make it into the list and which of those included have you had nothing but trouble with? Positive or negative, get it off your chest by dropping us a line at pi@paragon.co.uk.

File download Software

THE POPULARITY OF downloading and exchanging files over the Net has burgeoned since the days of 'Napstermania'. While the ill-fated peer-to-peer service might now have gone to the wall, there are still plenty of ways to get hold of music, video and programs, not least from the stand-out, KaZaA.

1. KaZaA Media Desktop 1.5
Sitting pretty in the top five overall, KaZaA ranks as the finest file sharing utility we've ever ran into. Fast, fun and easy to use, the software is used by millions worldwide, meaning you can get your hands on practically anything you want at no cost.

2. AudioGalaxy
With possibly the biggest range of songs at your fingertips anywhere on the Net, AudioGalaxy is the perfect client for the hardcore music collector seeking out those rare MP3s.

3. Star Downloader
Managing to live up to its name, Star Downloader comes out of the rigorous judging process as the number one download accelerator.

4. Download Accelerator
While we're not convinced that the developer's estimate of a 300 per cent increase in download times is particularly accurate, Download Accelerator is nevertheless, a true gem.

5. FTP Voyager
Setting sail on the journey towards file sharing enlightenment is made quick and comfortable with this top notch utility.

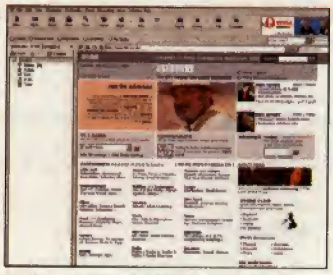
BEST OF THE REST

6. LimeWire
7. iMesh
8. GoZilla Free 4.11
9. WinMX 2.6
10. Leech FTP

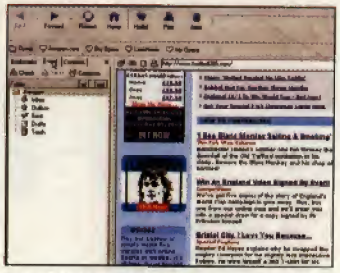
Most popular Net programs of all time

THESE CROWD PLEASERS have been pushing the buttons of Net users for years. Instant messaging client, ICQ, tops the table with over a staggering 194 million downloads from popular sites Download.com (http://download.cnet.com) and ZDNet (www.zdnet.co.uk/downloads). Morpheus scoops the silver medal and is now firmly establishing itself as the people's replacement for the now defunct Napster client, as the top file sharing utility.

Number	Name	Number of downloads
1	ICQ 2001b	194.3m
2	Morpheus Preview Edition	84.3m
3	WinZip 8.1	71.2m
4	Yahoo! Messenger 5	36.5m
5	Download Accelerator 5	29.5
6	ZoneAlarm 2.6.362	27.9m
7	GoZilla Free 4.11	27.5m
8	Winamp 2.78	26.7m
9	Adobe Acrobat Reader 5	10.2m
10	WebFerret 4.0	7.5m



The fastest browser on the planet. End of story



Opera has some features the major players lack

4 Opera

www.opera.com

When Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator both reached their sixth versions within months of each other, browser hype attained a whole new level. Amidst much back-stabbing and counter-claims, the 'big two' slogged it out in front of an increasingly embarrassed world.

Just as these two thoroughbreds approached the finish line, however, the third entrant in this two horse race romped past them to claim victory. Attracting less publicity than The Krankies opening a mobile library at 5am in Llandudno, Opera 6 is by far the best browser in the world.

Boasting a slimline interface, Opera cuts out all the rubbish you normally have to put up with. You can also (Microsoft please take note) get into multi-window browsing without having to perform bizarre window gymnastics. Most of all, though, Opera takes the shortcut mentality of IE6 and extrapolates it – this means you can control every, and we mean every, function of the program without having to touch that furry rodent sitting on your desk.

And just when we thought Opera couldn't get any better, Opera 6 introduced 'mouse gestures'. One of our favourite things in the world, this is almost as good as having a touch screen monitor. All you do is waggle your mouse about to navigate through Web pages – it takes a few minutes to get used to, but you'll never be the same again. Go on, try Opera. We promise you'll love it.

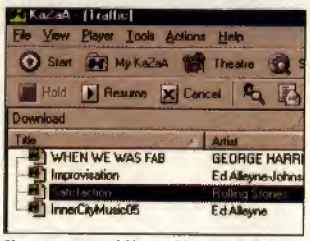
KaZaA's ability to download the same file from different sources rocks

3 KaZaA

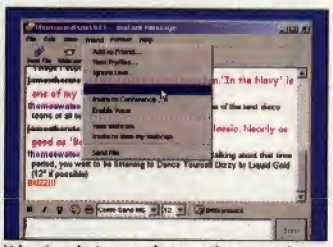
www.kazaa.com

Although some file sharing clients have more users, and therefore more files for you to plunder, none come close to the simplicity of KaZaA. Forget about connecting to servers and networks (who the hell cares which server you're connected to anyway?), and instead enter file-sharing heaven with a couple of mouse clicks. It's so easy to use, even your granny could do it, if she was keen to pick up a bootleg copy of *Buffy* or *American Pie*, that is.

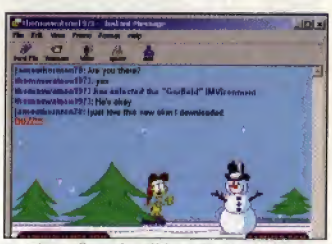
Unashamedly based on the Napster model, KaZaA contains a number of important enhancements from its biological father. Fundamentally, KaZaA lets you share any file type you choose, meaning you're not limited to MP3s as with Napster. This results in a nicely refined search system, giving you all manner of criteria on which to base your results. A favourite feature in the *Practical Internet* office is the 'find more sources' option. Found that long lost MP3 file you've been hunting down for years, but end up having to download it from a really slow source? Well, this tool will let you pick the file up from various sources simultaneously, boosting your connection, and ensuring that the download source doesn't unexpectedly drop out before the end.



Share any type of file you like with KaZaA



Yahoo! packs in more features than its rivals



Deeply intellectual stuff from Thomas and James

2 Yahoo! Messenger

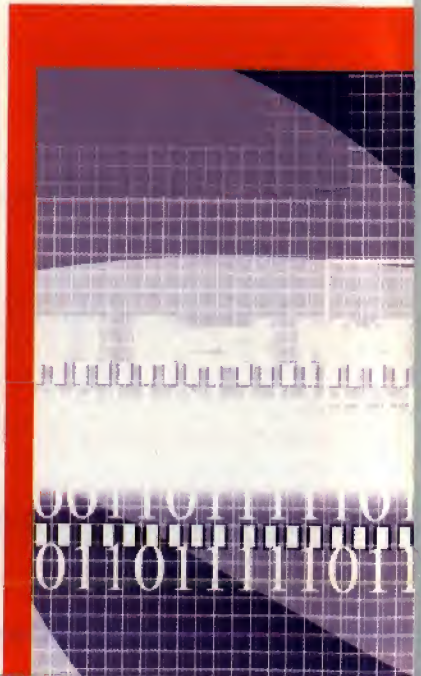
www.yahoo.com

Growing up in the Net age, you should really be getting stuck into your Instant Messengers. Not only can you contact mates anywhere in the world in real-time, but you can save yourself the hassle of having to phone people as well.

Despite ICQ still being the most popular messenger, Yahoo! Messenger is by far the most feature-intensive messenger. Based on the staggeringly comprehensive and all-encompassing Yahoo! Chat system, YM is the only client to feature full chat room capabilities. This gives you the best of both worlds – instant messaging, and the ability to insult Americans in a chat room to boot. Everyone's a winner.

Not only that, but recent improvements to Yahoo! Messenger mean that you can now indulge in voice chat without ever leaving the confines of your chat room. Hell, you can even use this baby for video chatting – although of course, this depends entirely on how enticing the prospect of watching you is to the person on the other end.

When all is said and done, Yahoo! Messenger should be the only chat client you ever install on your PC. Just make sure your mates get a copy as well, so that you've actually got someone to talk to that isn't a 15-year-old American geek.



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THE WINNER

1 WinAmp

www.winamp.com

→ OF ALL THE utilities, tools and programs you can shove on your PC, the WinAmp star shines the most brightly. Yes, you can get programs promising to perform more functions on your PC, but none do their job as well as WinAmp. The key to WinAmp's success lies in the fact that it's the only MP3 player you'll ever need.

So what makes WinAmp so good? Well, for a start, you won't find a more intuitive player on the market. Split into three distinct sections, the WinAmp interface lets you deal with playback, graphic equaliser functions and playlists separately. The main upshot of this is that you can control songs incredibly easily, with playlists a particular pleasure to create. And as regular readers might know by now, we like a good keyboard shortcut. Only Opera offers a more comprehensive range of shortcuts – but the abundance of playback options mapped to keystrokes makes adjusting your MP3 listening a doddle.

Some of the skins in WinAmp are very tasteful indeed – as this example shows

Simplicity itself

As well as the ability to generate incredibly detailed playlists with the minimum of techy MP3 knowledge, WinAmp also offers a whole lot more. For a start, importing songs from different sources can be a right hassle Not so with Winamp – just browse to the folder, right-click on the MP3 in question, and choose 'Enqueue in WinAmp'. The song is added to the current playlist, and you haven't even touched the program.

Despite the beauty and simplicity of WinAmp, its immense popularity actually comes down to something entirely different. WinAmp is, without a doubt, the most skinned program on the planet. Don't know what skinning is? Well, install WinAmp and take a look at the way you can instantly and completely change the interface by downloading one tiny file. This way, you'll get yourself a handy crash course in skins, and find out how WinAmp works at the same time. At the time of print, there were some 45,576 skins to choose from, ranging from Britney to futuristic 3D styles. If you can't find something you like from this, then you're just being overly picky.

When visualisations go mad: some will give you a headache, but they are nice to look at

The download fun doesn't stop there. You can pick up thousands of plug-ins and visualisations to transform your listening experience into more of a multimedia event. We have ambivalent feelings towards visualisations – on the one hand they create dazzling visuals, on the other hand, visualisations hog vast amounts of system resources. But they're there is you want them.

Plug away

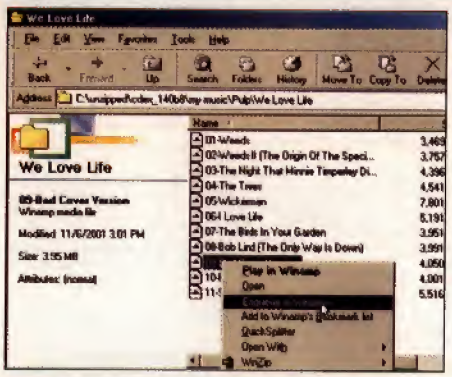
Plug-ins are a different matter entirely, though. In short, you can turn this fantastic MP3 player into just about anything you wish, including a racing game (honestly). More usefully, you can also import lyric settings and different control methods into the program.

We like WinAmp, mainly because it combines ease of use with a dazzling array of features, and unparalleled personalisation options. Unless you have a bizarre aversion to music in every way, you really don't have an excuse for not having this on your PC.

WinAmp 3... Watch this space

JUST AS WE felt we'd approached an inner calm with our choice regarding the best free program around, Nullsoft threw a minor spanner in the works by announcing a new version of WinAmp. Entitled, rather unsurprisingly, WinAmp 3, this new edition is only at the beta stage right now. We're now in a tizzied frenzy of confusion: will version 3 be better, or will they try to cram too much stuff in and balls the whole thing up, a la GoZilla? From first glimpse of the beta, it would appear that the world is still on an even keel – some nice new playlist options and database entry recovery, mixed with a more comprehensive menu system, make for a mouthwatering MP3 medley of features.

Create a playlist in WinAmp



1 Enqueue in WinAmp

You don't actually need to run WinAmp to start importing songs into a playlist. Browse to a music folder on your hard drive, then right-click on any files you wish to import and select 'Enqueue in WinAmp'. Easy peasy.

2 Order your tracks

Once you've imported a few tracks, you'll see something similar to the above. You can re-order the sequence of songs by merely dragging and dropping tracks in the list. Having perfected your playlist, you can now set to work on saving it.

3 Save it for later

At the bottom-right of the interface, you'll see a 'list' button, which gives you full control over the creation, importing and saving of playlists. Click on this button, then choose 'Save' to store this list of songs as a tiny playlist file.

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ENTER RETRO GAMES ...HEAVEN

RELIVE A MISSPENT YOUTH WITH THE HELP OF AN ARCADE EMULATOR. LIKE **THOMAS WATSON**, YOU MIGHT FIND OUT THAT THE GAMES WERE BETTER BACK THEN

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Eyes focused firmly on the state of the art graphics, the teenage prodigy fleets nimble-fingered past another end of level boss. Crowds of onlookers gasp at his lightning-quick reactions, not to mention the dazzling depth of gameplay offered by the black wooden box.

We're not talking about the launch of yet another 'super-console', designed to spawn even more techno-brats, overfed on photo-realistic graphic renderings and oh-so-clever artificial intelligence. No, we're talking 1984 – a time when Clive Sinclair ruled the computing roost, when every girl fancied George Michael, and when the only way to see the latest and greatest games was to get yourself down to the local arcade.

Let's face it, if you didn't spend at least some of your teenage years damaging your digits on the ungainly controls of your favourite coin-op, you lost out in a big way. Even a university education and high-paying job can't disguise your failure to join the gaming revolution at the very start, but worry not, for you can start atoning right now.

Nostalgia isn't as good as it used to be, but there are plenty of places on the Web to go for a quick fix of classic gaming nirvana. With all these MegaHertz at your disposal, isn't it about time that you turned that PC into something worthwhile? Yes, you could have your very own amusement arcade sitting atop your desk. What's more, it's easy. Go on, you know you want to.

Ready, MAME, fire

The first part of the arcade kit you'll need to get your hands on is an emulator. It may sound complicated, but this is actually the easiest part of the whole operation. All an emulator does is allow Windows to decipher the reams of previously nonsensical information that masquerades as an arcade game. In other words, the emulator contains all of the Operating System and boot information to make your games come to life. If it makes it easier, think of getting a Mac to run a version of Windows – the core OS is still there in the background, but you can perform all of the functions of the emulated system.

Thankfully, there is one unified emulator which does the job, and it's freely available (and on our CD). Known as MAME, the Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator incorporates virtually every arcade system known to man, as well as some that will only trigger a response from the Japanese development teams who created them.

Toodle along to the MAME home page at **www.mame.net** for a full rundown on what the utility can do for you, as well as the all-important latest version of the emulator. Once you've done this, you're ready to start reliving those halcyon

days filled with your formative forays into graphical wonderlands. Or are you?

Don't do me no ROM

Unfortunately, getting hold of an emulator is the easy part. Arcade games aren't packaged up in the now standard GUI and Simple Simon loading technique. Instead, you'll need to get to grips with the stingy nettle of ROMs to master your MAME.

The first minor obstacle stems from the fact that MAME doesn't mimic the arcade machine in question, but actually recreates it. You can't, therefore, simply load up a collection of emulation-friendly games, specially created to work at their optimum on your PC. Instead, you have to get hold of the original ROMs from the arcade chips. Mercifully, these aren't too difficult to pick up, with a wide array available for quick and easy download on the Net.

This presents the second, infinitely more prickly, problem. In short, ROMs are copyrighted by their original creator, meaning that you're actually supposed to buy each and every ROM before you use it on your PC. Fair enough, you might think – you don't mind shelling out a bit of hard-earned for some nostalgic OutRun action. Alas, finding somewhere to actually buy genuine ROMs is about as easy as finding Daley Thompson in your local arcade bashing the buttons of the Track 'n' Field machine. The best advice the MAME site can give you is to search on eBay.

Relive those Operation Wolf days where you needed cunning and stealth to beat the enemy. Or just a good aim

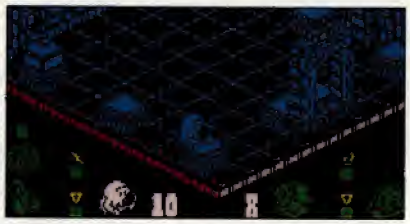
Legal rights and ROMs

This puts you, the intrepid old skool gamer, in a legal quandary. You want to recreate your finest gaming exploits, and show the world the skills that made you town champion of PacMan all those years ago. Unfortunately, even though you've got a completely legit copy of the emulator you need to run the games, it's impossible to get hold of the game files.

What to do? Well, like many other facets of PC life, someone's provided an easy answer for you. Although you can't buy ROMs for love nor money, you can actually download every game

Emulation madness!

NOSTALGIA IS RIFE these days, and you can find a program that will turn your PC into just about any other kind of old style computer. Here are a few of the best that you can pick up for nowt.



1 ZX Spectrum

www.spectrumarchive.freeserve.co.uk

Easily the best home computer of the Eighties, the loveable Spectrum found its way into some five million homes. With thousands of games freely available, you can relive your first faltering computing steps, and marvel at the eight-colour display and dodgy collision detection. The added advantage of playing Speccy games on your PC is that everything is so much easier to control – it's amazing how difficult that ruddy rubber keyboard made life.

2 Commodore 64

www.ccs64.com

There will always be great rivalries in life. Coke and Pepsi, Britney and Christina, Mac and PC. In 1984, it was Spectrum versus Commodore 64. While Clive Sinclair's rubber superstar won the battle hands down, the Commodore (which incidentally only had 32Kb of RAM, and not 64Kb) won a loyal following. You can expect chunkier graphics, but prepare to rejoice at the realistic skin tones and quadraphonic sound (maybe).

3 PlayStation

www.emulator-zone.com/psx

Emulation isn't all about nostalgia, you know. Just think – with 2GHz of power at your disposal, why shouldn't you be able to play the latest and greatest games? As always, you'll need a software emulator to fool your PC into thinking it's a PlayStation but once you've done that, all you need to do is shove in the game CD as you would normally, and you'll be in gaming heaven.

ever invented freely and easily from the Net. In fact, there are hundreds of sites devoted to bringing you the best in arcade gaming, dealing exclusively in the free distribution of ROMs.

At this point, we have to point out that the companies involved copyright these files. Like every other form of copying, you face the risk of making some people very unhappy if you're ever rumbled for using their ROMs. Any downloading of ROMs you do is therefore entirely at your own risk. We'd never advocate breaking da law, but **http://mamefans.metropoliglobal.com** will provide every ROM you'd ever need.

"ONE JOY OF PLAYING THESE OLD SKOOL GAMES IS THAT YOU CAN DOWNLOAD THEM IN AN INSTANT"

It's in the game

Now we've got the legal brouhaha out of the way, what can your shiny new MAME emulator do for you? Well, it can provide you with an exact replica of the arcade games you bunked off school to play. From the very earliest polygon blasters to mid-Nineties beat-em-ups, you'll find everything you need to relive your misspent youth. What you won't get is the authentic vertical box feel while you play, although you'll get some top-notch advice on creating your very own arcade stylee cabinet from **www.hpautoelectrics.com/millenniumcabinet.**

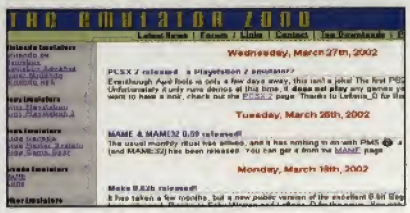
One of the joys of playing these old skool games is that you can download them in an instant. Space Invaders might have astounded the world with its graphical greatness 20 years ago, but the 10Kb file it encompasses now takes seconds to download. Even the biggest, most graphically intensive of games, will only take you ten minutes or so.

Memory lane

Another dimension you'll quickly pick up on is the way that, even if you'd never normally consider playing games on your PC, you won't be able to stop playing these ancient gaming relics. Maybe we see the world through rose tinted spectacles here at *Practical Internet*, but there's something so much more playable and enjoyable in simple platform games. You don't get any of the 'learning curve' of current games – where you need to leave your job, get a divorce and farm your kids out to a Singapore sweatshop just to spend enough time on the program to get past the first level. Whatever your particular bag, be it PacMan or Street Fighter, you can pick it up and drop it whenever you like – or rather, you won't be able to stop playing it, for when that little yellow peril gets into your bloodstream, you won't be able to drag yourself away from munching those pills. And mark our words, you'll even dream about PacMan, oh yes you will.

So, unless you want to continue spending far too much time and money on keeping up with the 'latest gaming trends', we'd suggest you get your hands on a copy of MAME and a couple of games. Great gameplay, fantastic sounds, and a heady aroma of nostalgia combine to give you the perfect chance to relive those halcyon days of yore, when you were a somebody in the gaming fraternity. ■

Find out more...



The Emulator Zone

www.emulator-zone.com

This is your one-stop shop for console emulation. From the grand old days of the original Nintendo and Sega Master Systems through to emulators that let you turn your PC into an Xbox, it's all here and in abundance. No matter what your console preference, you're bound to find what you need.

MAMEfans ROMs

http://mamefans.metropoliglobal.com

There are thousands of genuine arcade ROMs to be had with your MAME emulator. Yes, we know you're breaking the law by downloading them (unless you own an original copy that is), which is why we would recommend that you don't visit this site. Ever. And make sure that you wash behind your ears as well.

Ten arcade classics that ruined Thomas's schooling

Track & Field

The best button basher ever, this is the athletics game that took the world by storm. Join 'Hyper Willie' in his 100m and high jump antics and much more. Just last year, the *Practical Internet* office played host to a Track & Field Olympics, which resulted in much keyboard breakage.

OutRun

Forget your Gran Tourismos, this is the don of racing games. Complete with flashy red racer and glamorous babes, sit back and rock to Outrun's cool tunes as you tear down the myriad of dirt tracks.

Asteroids

The arcade game that invented arcade gaming, Asteroids asks nothing more of you than blasting the living daylights out of everything and anything on the screen. Mindless, speedy, ridiculously addictive fun.

Space Invaders

Shoot at things. Hide behind other things. It's all set in space, so we presume we're dealing with spaceships, although it's difficult to tell.

PacMan

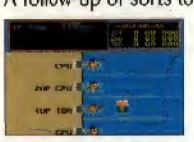
Munch the pills and avoid the ghosts whilst moving your little yellow mouth man around the maze. It was the main reason for many acne-ridden louts failing their O-Levels 20 years ago.

Donkey Kong

Few coin-ops have had such a profound impact on the gaming timeline as Donkey Kong. Not only did it introduce a certain Super Mario to the world, but this was also the very first ever platform game.

Hyper Sports

A follow-up of sorts to Track & Field, Hyper Sports introduced bizarre sports like archery and vaulting to an unsuspecting public. Treat yourself to a cheap new keyboard and then thump the crap out of it. This, my son, is the way to world records.



Kung Fu Master

Everybody was kung fu fighting in the mid-Eighties with this peach of a beat-em-up. Long before Street Fighter, Kung Fu Master let you run about and kick henchmen, knife wielding villains and midgets like it's what you were born to do.

Operation Wolf

Never did a game give you such a great opportunity to kill lots and lots of people. Even better, you could shoot them with a realistic gun – point it at them on screen, and watch them fly in the air, then shuffle off this mortal coil. Or not, if you were rubbish, like we were.

Street Fighter

Taking the Way Of The Exploding Fist model a step further, this one-on-one fighting game introduced us to a range of lovely characters, all defined by their special moves. It's still as good as anything you can buy nowadays, you know.

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The download daddies

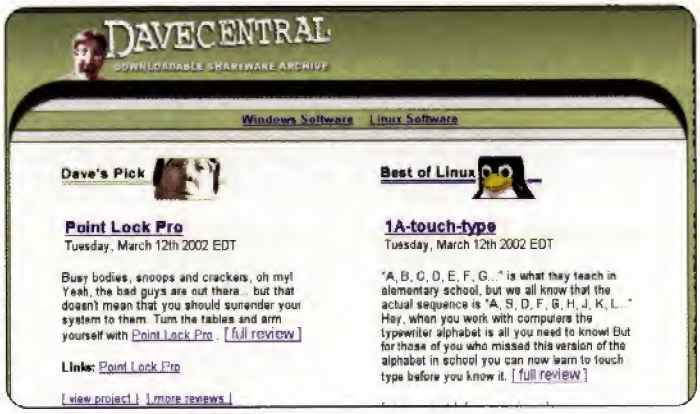
SITE TEST

THE INTERNET IS AWASH WITH SITES WHICH EXIST SOLELY TO PROVIDE YOU WITH FREE DOWNLOADS. **NIK TAYLOR** FIRES UP HIS BROWSER AND TESTS THEM TO DESTRUCTION

This computing lark can be an expensive business. No sooner have you shelled out for that shiny new PC, than you realise you need to take out another loan for all the extra hardware to go with it. The last thing anyone needs is to be spending more money on software programs as well.

Fortunately, the Net is positively heaving with all manner of free downloads. Quite frankly, you should never, ever find yourself queuing in your local computer store with a box of software under your arm. All your PC needs can be seen to with a few downloads from the Net. And best of all, much of it is free. Everything from personal firewalls to email programs to Web site builders can be acquired for absolutely nothing. Even the stuff you have to pay for comes in handy 'trial-ware' flavour, enabling you to check out the program for a month or so before you part with your hard-earned. Of course, it's not just software you can find online. There are also gazillions of music files, movie clips, hardware drivers and gaming demos there for the taking.

Take all of this into account and you can see why it's a good idea to get to grips with the download sites that can provide you with this great stuff. And there are bucket-loads of the beauties out there, make no mistake. Of course, you're sure to find some more useful than others, which is where this stroll through a selection of the best download sites comes in. We've taken a butcher's at a range of useful clicks, and reviewed and rated them to point you in the direction of the best.



DaveCentral

www.davecentral.com

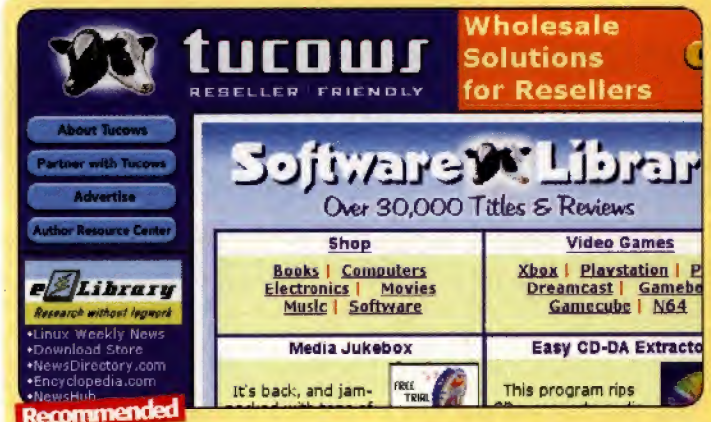
THE SCARY-LOOKING guy that leers out from the home page of this site is, apparently, Dave. Dave is a self-confessed geek and has something of a penchant for downloads. So much so, he has set up this impressive site, devoted entirely to supplying Net users everywhere with the latest must-have shareware. Every day, a new download is added and reviewed. Do bear in mind, however, Dave only likes downloads for Windows and Linux systems, so all you Mac-lovers had best click elsewhere. Those of you that remain will find a site laden with thousands of downloads, which on the whole, is easy to use. Just select the OS you're using and then click through a variety of folders to dig up the program you need. Alternatively, the site's searcher works pretty well, and will unearth what you're after with little fuss.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	76%

✔ Regularly updated

✖ Site's design can be confusing



Recommended

Tucows

www.tucows.com

IT TAKES A lot to come up with a link between cows and download sites. Despite this, Tucows is a site that's festooned with the bovine beauties. So what is the link? Could it be Tucows is secretly run by a herd of Friesians? Sadly, the answer is a little more prosaic – the name simply came about as the acronym of 'The Ultimate Collection of Winsock Software'. But never mind, for this minor disappointment does absolutely nothing to detract from the quality of this site. An astonishingly vast collection of software is available for every operating system you could care to name. On top of that, there are bundles of mirror sites to ensure you get hold of your programs in double-quick time. The only annoyance is the navigation system, which makes finding your desired download something of a chore.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	87%

✔ Bundles of programs

✖ Tricky navigation

VersionTracker.com

www.versiontracker.com

IT'S EASY TO feel a little persecuted if you're a Net-surfing Mac user. All around you are wonderful sites offering all manner of sparkly programs and downloads sites. Look closer, though, and you'll find many with their doors firmly closed to anyone not sporting an 'I love Bill Gates' bumper sticker on their modem. Happily, sites such as VersionTracker are here to help, with a startling array of programs for anyone with Apples in their eyes. Of course, there's shed-loads of Windows stuff here as well – so everyone should be happy. There's certainly a lot to look through – unfortunately the search function is a disappointment. Unless you make some inspired use of the advanced search facility, you can easily find yourself drowning in a sea of links.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	81%

✔ Wide choice for Mac users

✖ Poor search facility

ZDNet

www.zdnet.co.uk/software

ANOTHER OF THE software-supplying goliaths is this effort from ZDNet. It's unsurprising this site is so large really, since it's owned by Cnet, the same chaps behind the giant Download.com. On top of that, ZDNet's download pages now incorporate the old favourite, SoftSeek, making this a real challenger for Download.com's crown. At least in terms of size, that is. Unfortunately, the thousands of programs on offer aren't all that easy to search through, and there's a very strong Windows bias. Ultimately, this is just a download addition to the rest of the ZDNet site, and while there's a lot here, the lack of specialisation is fairly evident. We're a bit dubious as to how often it's updated, as well. When *Practical Internet* recently visited, the site's home page still offered a selection of Christmas-themed downloads.

The verdict

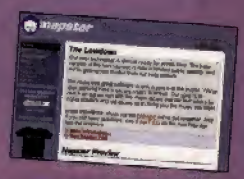
Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	69%

✔ Bundles of software

✖ Bad, bad design

Where's Napster?

ONCE UPON A time music was free. Up until spring 2001, the now-infamous Napster enabled people around the planet to share their MP3s with each other via the Net, for absolutely nothing. Unsurprisingly, the recording industry took a dim view of this free-for-all, and as a result of a court battle which continues to this day, the pioneering site was shut down. However, Napster remains by far the most famous example of a file-sharing program – a handy software app which give you the ability to download files, including MP3s, from the PCs of other users. And although Napster may have been cut down in its prime, file-sharing is still kicking. These days, one of the most popular is Morpheus (**www.musiccity.com**), which to the end user is basically Napster with a different name. But while file-sharing may live on, downloading copyrighted material using this is still very illegal. So don't do it.



Alternative downloading

IT'S NOT JUST Web sites that make programs available for download. Also popular among the Net-set is the practice of Anonymous File Transfer Protocol. At its most basic level, this enables users to access FTP servers and download files from them. The bonus of this is that you don't need to have a password to access the files. This means that Webmasters are allowed to make available stacks of files for public consumption. In practice, the whole system is perfect for software pirates. Although there are plenty of legitimate uses for anonymous FTP, abuse of it is quite common. FTP servers are often used to transfer copyrighted software and other programs. File-sharing programs may be easier to use, but anonymous FTP is still used to quickly (and illegally) distribute anything from operating systems to new movies.

Speed it up

IT'S WHEN IT comes to performing tasks such as downloads that the average 56k modem user starts to pull hair out. But while these poor saps continue to rage at their machine and wistfully dream of a world where they could get ADSL, the rest of us can take a rather more rational approach. There are several ways in which you can squeeze an extra few kilobytes per second from your cranky old modem. Obvious considerations such as a change of ISP or hardware aside, one of the most useful is the modem speed booster. Download sites are crammed with these little beauties, with some doing the job better than others.

These programs basically tweak your PC's settings and preload your specified sites. By doing so, your browsing and downloading becomes a slightly less fraught affair. Search any of the software download sites for programs such as FastNet 99 4.1, Internet Rocket and Connection Accelerator.

WindowsMedia.com

www.windowsmedia.com

THOSE INTERNET USERS benefiting from the wonders of a broadband connection will love this site, as it's dependent mainly on streaming content. Meanwhile, those of us that struggle on with a 56k connection will find precious little to check out, save a few blocky music videos. Downloads are particularly thin on the ground. The Windows Media Player download aside, all you'll find are music files – and not many of them at that. Digging them up is tricky – basically a case of going to an artist's page to find out if they have any material for download. Once you do get your hands on a file, you'll find it's a **.wma** effort. This means it's subject to restrictions.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★☆☆☆
Features	★★★☆☆
Ease of use:	★★★☆☆
Overall percentage:	59%

✔ A great streaming site

✖ Little to download

NEW Music sharers

Still unavailable to UK residents, Pressplay provides plenty of MP3 action

THE UPSHOT OF Napster's much-publicised downfall is that the major record companies now feel confident there is a booming market for selling MP3s online. Despite their confidence, many people have questioned whether the surfing public will be prepared to pay for what it used to getting for nothing. Especially if it means paying the same people who protested against the free services in the first place. However, subscription services such as MusicNet (**www.musicnet.com**), Pressplay (**www.pressplay.com**) and Wippit (**www.wippit.com**) have been launched in a

FilePlanet

www.fileplanet.com

COMPUTER GAMES ARE the new rock-and-roll, don't you know. The big new releases can now attract as much interest as major Hollywood movies, and their stars are as famous as top actors. If you're one of the millions with a devotional attachment to your joy-pad, this is one download site you'll definitely want to visit. It specialises solely in gaming downloads, so you'll find patches and upgrades for PC games, along with demos of upcoming releases. The range of

downloads is pretty good, with all the major titles covered. You'll also find an impressive range of gaming-related downloads. For instance, one utility on offer is designed to make it simple to chat to other online gamers. The site also includes discussion forums which are well-populated and interesting. The downside to the site, however, emerges whenever you click on a link. It is very, very, s-l-o-w.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★☆☆
Overall percentage:	79%

✔ Stacks of gaming downloads

✖ Very slow site

MP3.com

www.mp3.com

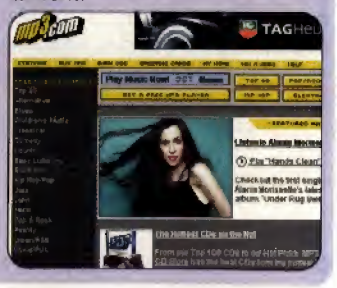
OKAY, SO YOU'RE after a few free music downloads. Well, where better to go than MP3.com? After all, it's even named after what you're looking for, right? However, as snazzy as its name may be, MP3.com is something of a let-down. Although it's true that there are stacks of downloadable MP3s on offer here, the big question is: have you heard of many of them? Unless you're a regular on the amateur music scene, the answer will probably be a no. The tunes from recognised artists are, on the whole, streaming-only, so you're left to download tunes from random artists. Despite this, it's not possible to fault the site in any other way. The design is top-notch and navigation is an absolute dream to use. And, after all, the lack of well-known music is all to do with the record companies and nothing to do with MP3.com. But, in the end, how many of these downloads are you actually going to want?

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★☆☆
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	72%

✔ Easy to use

✖ No well-known music



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OR £139.95/PA

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DriverGuide.com

www.driverguide.com

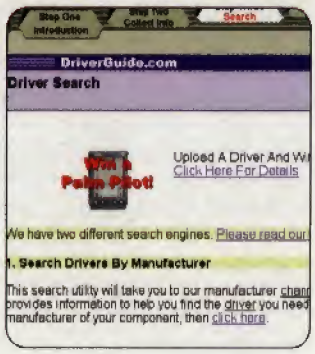
ONE OF THE most frustrating problems you can have with a computer is losing a driver for your hardware. Should a driver be accidentally deleted, it can be tricky to find it anywhere. In particular, if your hardware is a few years old, even the official Web site may no longer have a copy of the driver. Which is where sites such as this come in. The amateurish styling of DriverGuide.com belies the huge range of downloads it makes available. The idea of the site is simply to enable people to upload hard-to-find drivers for others to use. You can then leave feedback, so other visitors to the site know whether the download is any cop. Also included on the site is a vast selection of links to other sites where you might find that elusive download.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	73%

✔ Wide selection

✘ Tricky to use



Jumbo

www.jumbo.com

JUMBO IS ANOTHER variation on the theme of sites which provide huge amounts of freeware and shareware. It's also another decent effort, with a clear, simple design making it easy to ferret through the available software. PC, Linux and Mac users are all catered for here, although the emphasis is certainly placed on pleasing the Windows brigade. This makes it a bit less of a guaranteed crowd-pleaser than some of the more inclusive sites – but any complaints certainly won't be coming from PC users. The site looks a little dated design-wise, but this simple styling does make Jumbo fairly stress-free to use. If you're passing by, then be sure to click on the 'Must-haves' link, where you'll find a reasonably well-chosen selection of 'essential' software. Everything here is solid, but it must be said there's little to really make Jumbo really stand out from the crowd.

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	71%

✔ Friendly interface

✘ Little innovation

Download.com

www.download.com

HAVING SNAPPED UP one of the best Web addresses on the Net, the folks behind Download.com then set about creating one of its best sites. When all's said and done, they did a rather good job. Download.com is an immense site and it's the first port of call for many a weary surfer on the hunt for software. The entire interface of the site is a joy to use and makes finding that elusive program is a snap. On top of this, the site loads quickly and the actual download process is quick and free of glitches. What makes the site even better is its sense of community. Thousands of users flock to the feedback section of the site, leaving their opinions for others to read. So if you're looking for a type of program, but don't which one to plump for, you can find out what other users think.

TOP SCORER

The verdict

Range of downloads:	★★★★★
Features	★★★★½
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Overall percentage:	95%

✔ Just about everything

✘ Sometimes overwhelming

"DOWNLOAD.COM IS THE FIRST PORT OF CALL FOR MANY A WEARY SURFER"

The round-up

OF COURSE, YOU can download anything you want from the Internet – so the site you find most useful will be dependent on what your interests are. But while clicks such as MP3.com and WindowsMedia can be handy if you're after music files, the limited range of well-known tunes handicaps both. By contrast, the range of software programs available freely all over the Net is huge. And regardless of your interests, anyone using the Net needs to download some key programs such as virus killers, firewalls and plug-ins. This is why the likes of VersionTracker and Tucows impress, and have scored highly. On both, a wide range of downloads is complemented by an intuitive interface.

But it's Download.com that ultimately takes the plaudits, thanks mainly to its fantastic usability. You'll struggle to find anything this enormous site doesn't have on offer and finding exactly what you do need is refreshingly easy.

Copyright wranglings continue to dog music and video downloads, but the software industry has got a decent system in place. If you want a program, you can either have it free – or keep it for a bit and then pay for it. The system works well and ensures the software downloaders are the best of the bunch.

NEW

Music sharers

continued

fanfare of publicity. Apart from Wippit, these services are yet to be launched over in good old Blighty, but once they are you'll have to pay a regular fee to use them. Normally, this will entitle you to a limited number of downloads per month. In the case of Wippit, the cost is £30, which entitles you to a year of downloads.

Apart from the price, customers will also have to take into account the range of music offered by these new services. Since not all the record companies are signed up to each one, you could find your choice of download limited depending on which one you choose.

For £30, you can download as many MP3s as you like from Wippit

Many People, One World, **One Host.**

Web Hosting

Dedicated Servers

eCommerce

Domain Name Registration

SHARED HOSTING.
Home. 100Mb £60pa
Commerce.
200Mb: ASP, SSL
£18pm or £180pa
Reseller.
Host Unlimited Domains
ASP, SSL
£45pm or £450pa
Enterprise.
Mirrored, load-balanced
Servers1000Mb
£120pm or £1,200pa

Features
Microsoft Windows 2000/NT based Web Services running IIS
Web Based Control Panel
Microsoft FrontPage 2002 Server Extensions
FREE Domain Name Registration or Transfer
30 Day Money Back Guarantee
FREE dial-up access
Telephone/EMail Technical Support

DEDICATED HOSTING.
Gold
600Mhz, 128Mb, 10Gb Drive
£200pm or £2,000pa
Diamond
700 Mhz, 256Mb, 2x9Gb SCSI
£300pm or £3,000pa
Platinum
850 Mhz, 512Mb, 2x18Gb SCSI
£400pm or £4,000pa

Features
Microsoft Windows 2000 Server Powered
Same day set-up
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No Set-up fee
Secure InterHouse based 100mb switched network
24hr telephone/email support
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Host an UNLIMITED number of web sites
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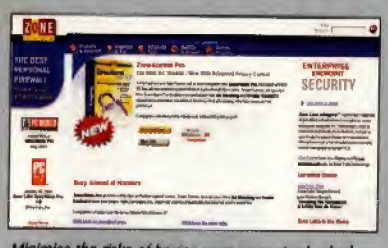
Who really RULES the

DO YOU THINK WE LIVE IN A FREE AND PLEASANT LAND, OR ARE YOU CONVINCED BIG BROTHER HAS A HEALTHY INTEREST IN EVERYTHING YOU DO? **NICK SWEENEY** POKES AMONG THE SHADOWS TO SEE WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS BEHIND THE NET

Imagine a world ten years from now, in which every email and every Web page you browse is checked by a government computer for suspicious content. How about a world in which new Web sites must meet corporate approval before they go online, or where copying a CD to use in the car is a criminal offence? Or one where a single, centralised database holds your bank and credit card details, remembers everything you buy, and even stores your medical details?

It all sounds like something out of George Orwell's 1984, but this is a worst-case scenario of what might happen to the digital world over

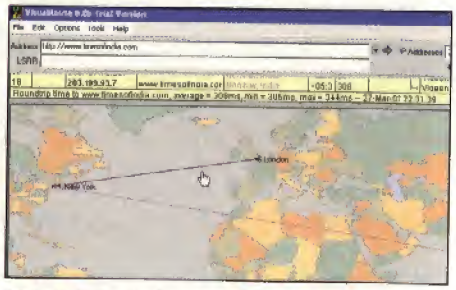


Minimise the risks of having your computer hacked with a freeware package like Zone Alarm

SPOOKBUSTING: HOW SAFE IS YOUR PERSONAL DATA?

So, with all this talk of central control and online surveillance, can you be confident that your personal details aren't being misused? Security consultant Andrew Gauntlett, author of the book _Net Spies_ **(www.net-spies.co.uk)**, puts it bluntly: "Everything that a person does on the Web, every email message, every Web page visited, every file downloaded, every conversation, is recorded somewhere." ISPs log your browsing patterns and email usage, spammers trawl Web archives for email addresses, and malicious hackers seek out unprotected data through web and email-based viruses, packet sniffers or direct attacks. The only thing you can do is minimise that risk, both on your own PC and when browsing the Web. Install a virus scanner and a firewall such as ZoneAlarm **(www.zonealarm.com)**, especially if you have a broadband connection; make sure that your browser's security settings warn of third-party cookies and dangerous downloads; and use encryption tools such as FineCrypt **(www.finecrypt.net)** to safeguard your files. In short: if you don't want people to know your secrets, don't put them online.

While EU countries all have data protection laws, US-based companies are free to use (and misuse) your email address or phone number: before providing information to American sites, check that they have a privacy policy describing what they plan to do with your data. Don't offer personal information, especially credit card details, to sites that you don't trust. Check the Web for reports from other customers, and look for a contact number as a safeguard. Finally, make sure that transactions use a secure server, showing a 'https' Web address and a yellow padlock icon on your browser, to protect yourself from packet-sniffing data-thieves.



Network of networks: the routes taken by Net traffic demonstrate the strengths of the hardware pinning the Internet together

NET?

the next decade. Hidden from the headlines, a battle is under way to control the soul and the structure of the Net, pitting technologists against content providers, and governments against civil liberties advocates. Even now, in the wake of the 11 September attacks, new laws are being passed to allow greater surveillance of Net users, while media moguls lobby for extended powers over technology to protect their copyrighted materials. While it may not be a grand conspiracy, many long-time users believe that these small, unheralded steps, if left unchallenged, will rob the Net of the openness and independence that fuelled its growth over the last decade.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

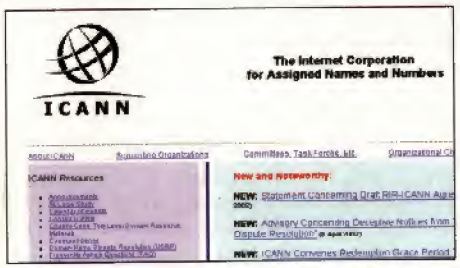
To understand why recent moves to control online infrastructure are so important, it's worth knowing a bit about how things got to be the way they are now. In its earliest days, the Net consisted almost entirely of academic, scientific and government institutions. The original ARPAnet of the 1970s was a Cold War project of the US Department of Defense, designed to pool computer resources and withstand a nuclear attack. Even today, these founding principles explain the Net's strengths: the power of the network is greater than the sum of its parts, and its decentralised structure means (in theory) that it can survive catastrophic failures.

For a sense of how the Internet is held together, click on your 'Start' menu, select 'Run', and enter '**tracert www.paragon.co.uk**'. A cryptic list of numbers and names will appear, representing the step-by-step journey from your own PC to our Web server, as data passes through a series of computers known as 'routers' to reach its destination. This indirect journey, a kind of electronic pass-the-parcel, allows Net traffic to 'route around' hardware failures, even if it means taking a detour to the other side of the world. In fact, the main infrastructure usually holds up under pressure: 'backbone' routes between countries and continents are kept running by well-maintained data exchanges that are funded by ISPs, academic institutions and governments. What's vital to the Net's robustness, though, is that no single authority controls enough of the network to bring the entire thing to its knees. That's one big reason why many governments and corporations feel threatened by its capabilities – and it's also why the Net's old hands don't want things to change.

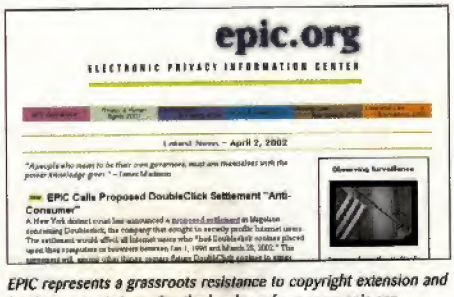
THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE

For the first 20 years of ARPAnet and the Internet, this international 'network of networks' was governed through a unique mixture of anarchy, meritocracy, and benevolent dictatorship. Anarchic because there was no real authority to control what people did online – meritocratic because the smartest technological solutions decided what actually happened. Its benevolent dictators were the tech-savvy boffins who worked on defining, designing and maintaining the communication protocols that held the system together, such as managing the servers of the Domain Name System (DNS), which maps Internet addresses (such as '**www.paragon.co.uk**') to individual computers on the network. This informal system thrived while the Net was still small-scale and populated by geeks and academics. The arrival of the graphical Web browser in the early 1990s changed all that: by providing user-friendly access to multimedia content, it spurred a massive expansion of the network, placing greater demands on its infrastructure and eventually drawing the attention of national and corporate interests.

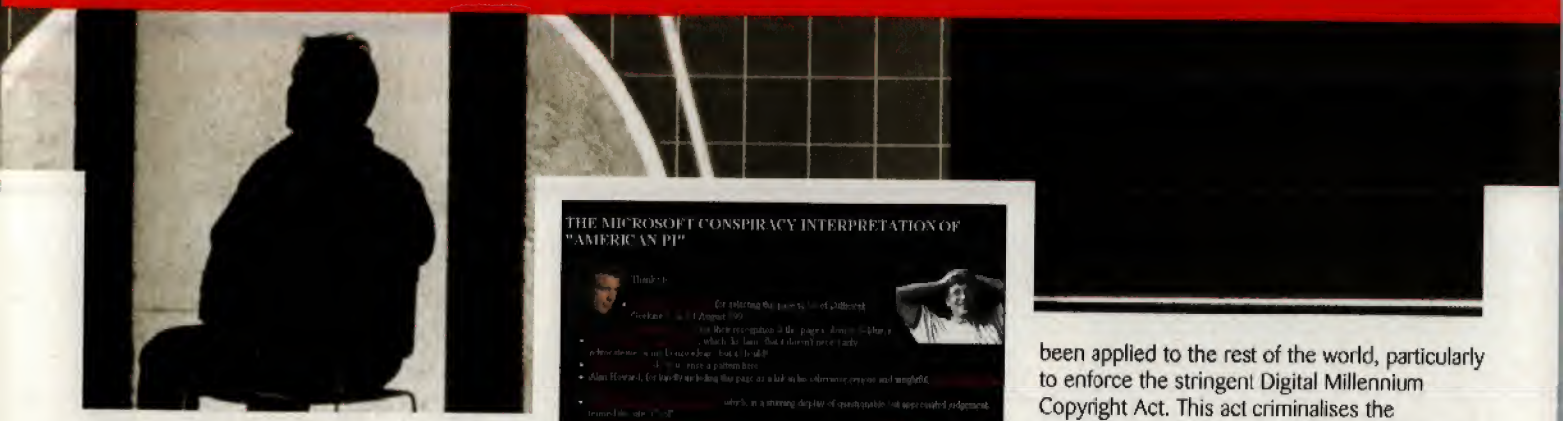
The business world's embrace of the Web has brought some key administrative changes. In 1998 the US government transferred official control of the DNS to an independent private organisation known as ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), run by an international committee of elected and appointed members. ICANN's founding aim was to manage the expansion of domain names for the benefit of the entire online community: it experimented in direct democracy by allowing Net users to elect local representatives to the



Ignore the rather rudimentary Web site, ICANN is at the hub of many of the most sensitive areas of Internet administration



EPIC represents a grassroots resistance to copyright extension and hardware restrictions. Get the lowdown from www.epic.org

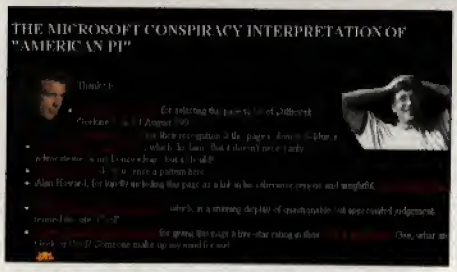


board. Since then, however, ICANN has been criticised for excessive secrecy, wastefulness, and a failure to listen to ordinary users. Its unelected founders have faced calls to resign from their elected counterparts, and many Net pioneers want the organisation radically reformed: one of those elected representatives, Karl Auerbach, is now suing ICANN for access to its financial records. In spite of this pressure, ICANN's committee has rejected further elections, and will vote in June on handing greater authority to governments and corporations. This move towards central control is the first real battle for the soul of the Net: if it's agreed, says Auerbach, "the Internet will now be run by a body that adheres to principles that otherwise died with the era of Queen Victoria."

THE POLITICIANS

ICANN's U-turn over DNS management will bring governments something they've long cherished: formal control over Net access and activity. In recent years, local authorities have struggled to enforce their own laws online, especially with so many sites based in the USA and protected by its constitutional right to free speech. A French anti-racism group is still fighting a court battle with Yahoo! to curb access to auctions of Nazi memorabilia, banned under

Surely freemasons aren't using Iron Maiden albums to manipulate teenagers? See Urban Legends for myth debunking par excellence

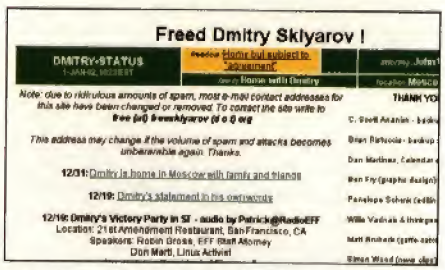


Pie in the sky: If Don McLean, writer of American Pie, and Bill Gates are behind it all there can't be too much to worry about

French law. However, this doesn't mean that anarchy rules the Net. Home users and ISPs alike have faced penalties under British law, as seen in the Lawrence Godfrey libel case, which found Demon Internet liable for 'publishing' other people's defamatory comments on a newsgroup it hosted. Because much of the existing statutes dealing with print, radio and television predates the Net's popularity, it's been up to judges over the past few years to assess whether the different forms of online communication fall under the same definitions.

That's starting to change, though. Security legislation such as the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIP) Act explicitly grants security authorities the power to snoop on Net traffic, while intellectual property law is being expanded to counter any loopholes created by file-sharing between sites that are often based on opposite sides of the world. In the meantime, politicians continue to win cheap plaudits for characterising the Net's population as a mixture of paedophiles, pirates and hackers.

Perhaps the most notable sign of the increasing involvement of national politics on the Net is how the long arm of American law has



Legal aid: when the US government locked up Russian programmer Dimitry Sklyarov the Net community rallied round

been applied to the rest of the world, particularly to enforce the stringent Digital Millennium Copyright Act. This act criminalises the circumvention of copy protection schemes: the FBI helped Norwegian authorities to arrest the author of DeCSS, a decryption tool which allowed Linux users to play DVDs, while Dimitry Sklyarov, a Russian programmer, was locked up for seven weeks while visiting the USA, because he had written a PDF decryption program that was perfectly legal in his own country. (See **www.freesklyarov.org** for details.) This outreach of US jurisdiction would be no bad thing, if it just extended rights to those in more restrictive regimes: the problem comes when the wholesale export of a single country's national interests, which now, all too often, match the interests of its large media corporations, threatens to transform the character of the Net. As with so many other examples, online globalisation appears to benefit a few, at the expense of the many.

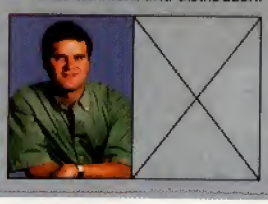
BIG BROTHER AND HIS LITTLE FRIENDS

As lawmakers crack down on the perceived culture of online piracy, the impact of international terrorism has led governments to ratchet up their surveillance of the Net for potential threats. Even before the attacks on the USA, the RIP Act required that ISPs install 'black boxes' to scan the routers for the addresses of sites being browsed, and emails being sent and received. The emergency anti-terrorism laws passed after 11 September expanded these powers, increasing the amount of data that ISPs have to keep on record. Across the Atlantic, the USA PATRIOT Act authorised a similar system known as 'Carnivore', which allows the FBI to monitor the actual content of email passing through ISP routers. The RIP Act also gave employers increased authority to monitor workplace Internet use. While some civil liberties campaigners such as the Foundation for Information Policy Research (**www.fipr.org**) argue that these powers violate the right to

TEN MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET

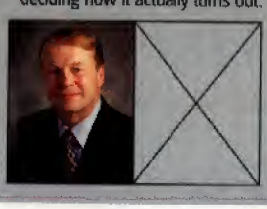
1. Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft
Gates wants to ally Microsoft's desktop dominance to the world of centralised Web services. With .NET, underpinned by Microsoft's Passport system, the prospects for success look good.

2. Steve Case, Chairman, AOL Time Warner
With the merger of AOL's Internet operations with the Time Warner publishing empire, Case now runs a media empire that controls every stage of online entertainment and distribution.

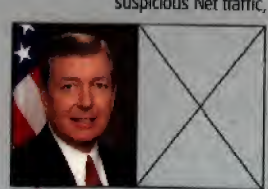


3. Michael Eisner, Chairman, Walt Disney Company
The head Mouseketeer has a huge stake in controlling access to Disney's property: he's a powerful lobbying voice for greater copyright protection and anti-piracy controls on digital hardware.

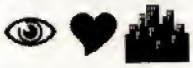
4. John Chambers, Chairman, Cisco Systems
Cisco provides most of the routing hardware that glues the Net together. Because of this, Chambers' vision of the Net's future will play a large part in deciding how it actually turns out.



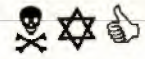
5. John Ashcroft, Attorney General, USA
In the wake of 11 September, the US's chief law-enforcer has increased the surveillance powers of the FBI. That means 'Carnivore' boxes openly snooping ISPs for suspicious Net traffic.



'NYC' in Webdings:



'NYC' in Wingdings:



It's obvious really, if you're planning to take over the world then at least make sure you've got the right fonts for the job...

privacy under the Human Rights Act, it will take a court judgement to decide either way.

Even without these powers, email has long been especially vulnerable to snooping, because messages are usually sent without any form of encryption and can therefore be intercepted by 'packet sniffing' software. For many years, researchers have tried to prove the existence of a huge surveillance network, codenamed ECHELON, which combines the intelligence facilities of the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and is believed to monitor millions of phone calls, emails, downloads and satellite transmissions every day from centres such as the secretive Menwith Hall base in Yorkshire. While no government has ever admitted that ECHELON exists, an EU-sponsored investigation of the system recommended using encryption tools such as PGP (**www.pgpi.org**) to protect email from being intercepted.

Should ordinary users be more worried by the threat of terrorism or the Big Brother tactics of the state? In a way, it doesn't matter. While governments favour greater central powers over the Net's infrastructure and activity in order to protect national security, many technology advocates argue that greater decentralisation is actually the best way to safeguard the public and civil liberties. The Net's built-in capacity to route around restrictions, with the aid of proxy servers and 'tunnelled' connections, means that even the tightest national firewalls can be breached, as seen in countries such as China and Saudi Arabia.

In fact, this centralising tendency may itself be a security risk, as it increases the chance of a terrorist attack or some other catastrophic event rendering the entire network unusable. For instance, ICANN's move to bring DNS under government authority makes it an easy target. Although the network infrastructure itself is resilient, an attack on the 'root servers' mapping the main domains would mean that most users would be unable to navigate it, rather like a motorway system without its road signs.

THE MEDIA MOGULS

After all this talk of surveillance and encryption, you'd be forgiven for thinking that these legal moves don't affect most users: as with CCTV in town centres, if you've nothing to hide, why should you worry about being monitored? Well, it's not just governments who want a say in how you spend your time online. Some of the world's biggest corporations are using their wealth and influence to push for restrictions on technology that could turn your PC into a glorified TV set. Their model of a digital future replaces the independent and anarchic two-way Web with a homogenised broadcast system, where users must pay subscription fees for access to software updates, music and video.

The underlying reason for this shift is the consolidation of vast media empires, bringing together record labels, publishers, software companies and ISPs. (Ironically, this diversification happened mainly because laws in Britain, the US and elsewhere prevented media tycoons from owning too much of a country's newspaper or broadcasting industry.) These huge corporations are especially powerful because they control both the creation of content and its online distribution, which gives them a vested interest in maximising their return on that original content, even if it works against technological innovation and consumer

Menwith Hall in Yorkshire is rumoured to be the home of the government's top secret ECHELON communications spy network

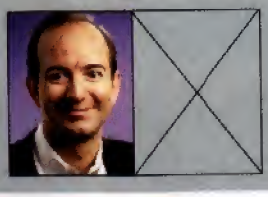
WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE

With corporations and governments licking their chops at the thought of increased control, what can ordinary users do to prevent the Net being dominated by a handful of companies and watched over by Big Brother? It's actually more than you might think – the online world has proved surprisingly resilient to corporate take-over. First of all, the geeks are striking back and responding by creating alternative networks and protocols such as the OpenNIC DNS network (**www.opennic.unrated.net**), the Mono Web service platform (**www.go-mono.com**), and the Freenet publishing system (**www.freenetproject.org**). There's also a grassroots resistance to copyright extension and hardware restriction, led by advocacy groups such as the EFF (**www.eff.org**) and EPIC (**www.epic.org**), making the case for schemes that benefit users as well as business interests. You don't have to join these organisations: the growth of personal publishing through 'weblogs' (**www.weblogs.com**) has also brought a sizeable community demonstrating the power of the Net to sustain independent media, free of the commercial interests of the giant content providers.

At the same time, increased surveillance of the Net means there's never been a better time to learn about encryption. While the concept behind PGP (**www.pgpi.net**) is best left to computer scientists, it's no longer arcane to use: just install the right plugins, or get an account at Hushmail (**www.hushmail.com**), and you can prevent your email falling into the hands of snoopers. You may not feel as if you have something to hide, but you wouldn't leave your door unlocked, would you?

Don't take chances with private messages, secure your data with an encryption tool like Hushmail instead

6. Jeff Bezos, CEO, Amazon.com
Amazon may be far from profitability, but it's built up the Net's biggest database of customer information and preferences. If you've ever bought anything from Amazon, they'll know more about your tastes than you'd like.



7. Larry Ellison, CEO, Oracle
Famed for his playboy lifestyle, Ellison's Oracle corporation dominates the database industry. He's offered to provide the US with a central identification database: needless to say, civil libertarians are less than impressed.

8. Lawrence Lessig, Electronic Freedom Foundation
A leading authority on Internet law, Lessig has fought moves to restrict the free circulation of information. His project, FreedomForum.com, aims to revitalise the collective spirit of the network.

9. David Blunkett, Home Secretary, UK
Inheriting the tougher surveillance regime pushed through by Jack Straw, Blunkett's anti-terrorism provisions place an even greater burden on ISPs to track their users. Expect this trend to continue.

10. Linus Torvalds, creator of Linux
He's not a billionaire CEO, but Torvalds' operating system underpins a grassroots movement to challenge corporate dominance with the free, open tools that built the Net in the first place.

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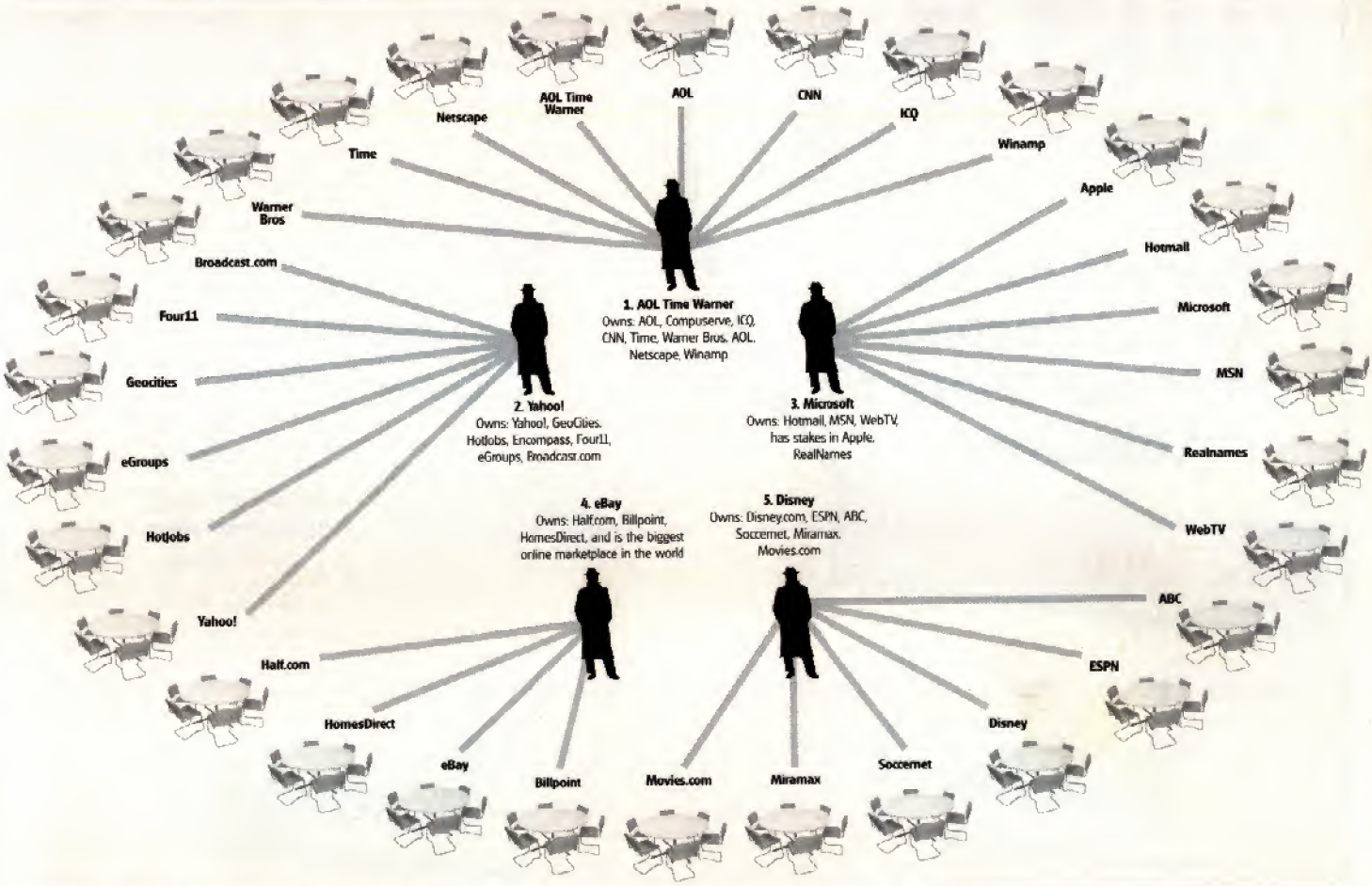
FIVE MOST POWERFUL COMPANIES ON THE WEB

There may be millions of Web sites to choose from, but a handful dominate the browsing habits of most users, especially those coming to the Net for the first time. The Nielsen chart (**www.nielsen-netratings.com**) shows a huge gap opening up between the giants of the Web world and the also-rans. Here's our top five:



demand. Look at it this way: you may think that you're resisting the overwhelming influence of Microsoft by choosing alternative software, but if you use Netscape to browse from CNN.com, while playing your Bjork CD with Winamp, everything you touch is owned by AOL Time Warner. Your chance of being able to pay AOL a reasonable price to download the Bjork back catalogue and burn it to a CD? Pretty slender.

Right now, a draft law in the US would force manufacturers of 'digital devices' to introduce built-in copy protection, essentially preventing users from ripping tracks from CDs, creating MP3s, and burning files to CD-R, no matter what the purpose. If it passes, it'll affect British users, because much of our digital equipment is designed to US specifications, including handheld computers, music players, digital cameras and TV receiver boxes. (Judging from recent comments, if the bosses of Disney could have their way, they'd stop people from taking photos of Mickey Mouse and sticking them online.) At the same time, the major record labels want to shut down unrestricted file-sharing networks and replace them with subscription services where users only have access to downloaded songs for as long as they pay the monthly fee.

Copyright violation is undeniably a problem, but many digital right advocates argue that such sweeping moves restrict innovation, threaten current copyright law, and cast Net users as thieves simply because the big media firms can't be bothered to come up with decent alternatives. As tech reporter Dan Gillmor puts it, "I'm not a thief. I'm a customer. When you treat me like a thief, I won't be your customer."

The final corporate threat to the old-school, decentralised Internet comes from Microsoft's .NET platform, a subscription-based Web services and eCommerce platform based around the Passport system used by Hotmail and Windows Messenger. While .NET is still described in vague terms by Microsoft, it revolves around centralised data storage and authentication: in essence, it's a big database containing your personal details, run by Bill Gates. Worried by that? Thought you might be. That's why the future of the Net is up for grabs: is it to become increasing centralised, and dominated by corporate and government interests, or can its huge grass-roots userbase use the technology's built-in resistance mechanisms to preserve its independence and openness? In a very real sense, the choice is up to you.

Icke's rap: who needs a rational take on globalisation when there's David Icke and his army of shape-shifting lizards?

THE TIN HELMET BRIGADE: INTERNET CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

1. David Icke (www.davidicke.com)
Goalkeeper turned snooker commentator turned Son of God, Icke's site is a Matrix-esque tale of how the world's leaders are shape-shifting lizards.

2. The 'American Pi' Microsoft Conspiracy (www.datasync.com/booda/mcap.html)
Claims that Don McLean's Seventies hit 'American Pie' actually tells the life story of Bill Gates.

3. Urban Legends (www.urbanlegends.com)
Everyone gets forwarded email containing wild stories that are just about believable. Have your doubts confirmed, or fuel your imagination here.

4. Hidden Messages in Microsoft Fonts (www.snopes2.com/rumors/wingding.htm)
Does Microsoft conceal offensive messages in its Wingdings and Webdings symbol fonts? The invaluable Snopes site weighs up the evidence.

5. Conspiracy-Net (www.conspiracy-net.com)
A clearing house for UFO nuts, Big Brother freaks, and those who fear the black helicopters, Conspiracy-Net feeds our paranoia.

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WORKSHOPS

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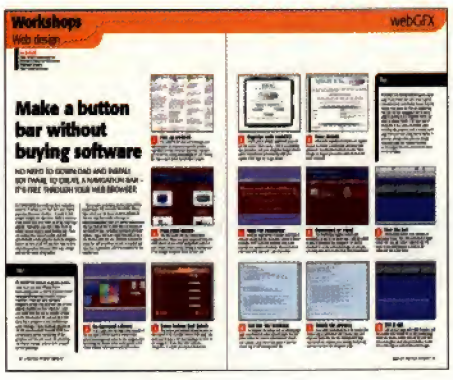


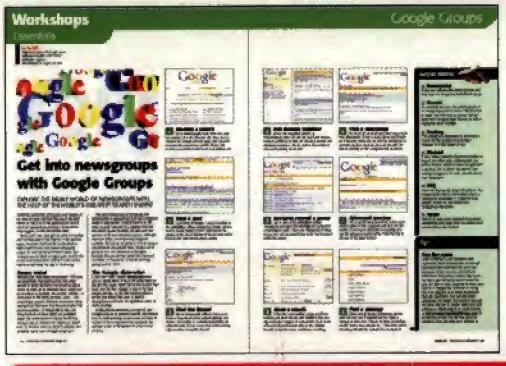
Welcome!

AS PC TECHNOLOGY improves, there are more and more ways for irritating companies to force their way into your system. This issue, we bring you a four-page rundown on how to protect yourself from this annoying 'scumware', and we also show you how to clean up your system after a bout of Web browsing.

Newsgroups are gaining popularity after a spell in the doldrums, mainly because of the download rewards they can reap. We show you not only how to get into newsgroups, but also how to use an FTP manager for those specialist download sites. As if that wasn't enough, we've got some top advice on Web design, with articles on both Dreamweaver and LiveMotion.

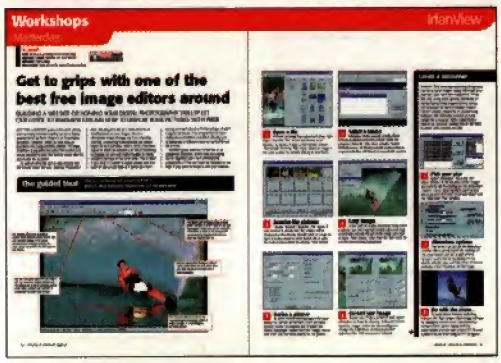
Thomas Watson, Technical Editor

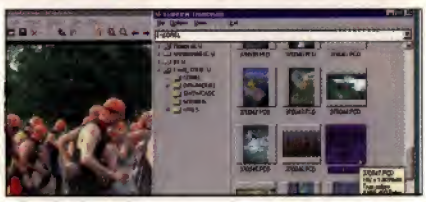
Essentials: page 52



THEY MAY NOT receive much press, but newsgroups still have a lot to offer. Discover what Usenet can do for you at the Google Groups Web site

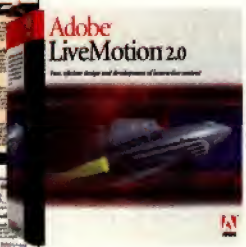
Masterclass: page 66





THERE'S PLENTY TO consider when you're preparing images to put on the Web. Thankfully, excellent programs like IrfanView make the whole process a walk in the park. We reveal all...

Web design: page 80



WEB ANIMATION IS a great way of adding some life to your site. On page 88 Clive Parker shares the secrets of cutting edge Web design using Adobe's excellent LiveMotion 2.0

In brief:
Task: Browse the Web more effectively
Software I need: Opera 6 is on this month's CD
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: As long as you like

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Lightning-fast surfing with the Opera browser

EXPERIENCE STREAMLINED SURFING BY DITCHING INTERNET EXPLORER AND NETSCAPE IN FAVOUR OF OPERA

TIRED OF MUNDANE, laboured Web browsing? Maybe it's time to change the way you surf by dumping IE or Netscape. Though not as widely renowned as its more popular rivals, Opera is a software gem that offers you an ultra-slick way to browse the Web.

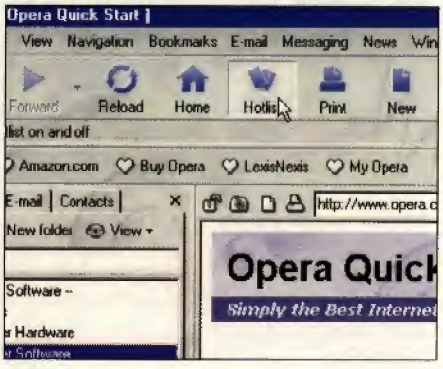
Instead of adopting the fiddly point-and-click mayhem of browsers like IE or Netscape, Opera relies much more on the keyboard, making it much easier to navigate pages. You can also program your own hotkeys to perform certain tasks such as going back or forward a page, reloading, accessing bookmarks etc.

What's more, the software allows you to run multiple browser windows giving you the chance to soak up even more information with some split-screen action. Opera also boasts integrated search and instant messaging facilities, email support and intuitive drag-and-drop functionality. You can even customise the interface by applying new skins that can be downloaded from the Web.

Better still, cranking up Opera will have you surfing faster than you've ever gone before.

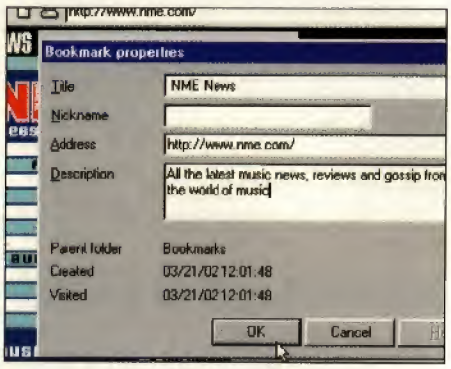
1 Break with tradition

The Start Options screen that appears when you first launch Operas lets you choose between the browser's visual modes. The 'Windows on desktop' option is the IE-style view. We're going for the multiple page 'Windows inside Opera' option.



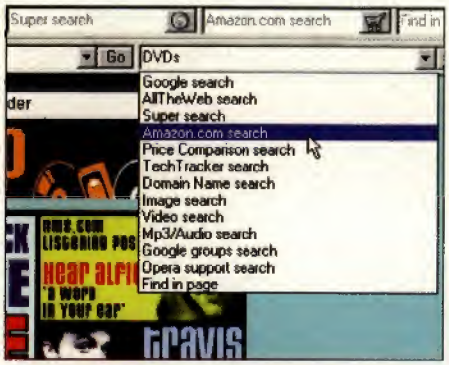
2 Hot stepping

One of Opera's key benefits is the 'Hotlist'. This works like the Explorer Bar in IE and gives you instant access to your favourite sites and email contacts. To toggle the list on and off, simply click the 'Hotlist' icon in the main toolbar.



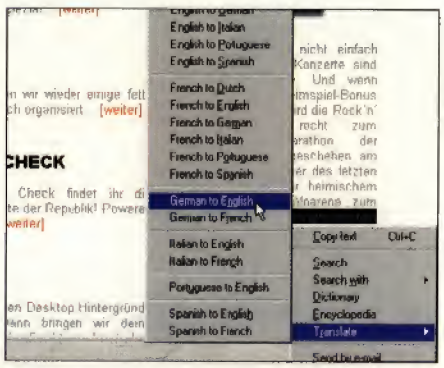
3 Make your mark

Opera makes it simple to add your favourite sites. Click on the 'Bookmarks' menu and choose 'Add Page here'. Now enter a title, nickname and description of the page. The browser already comes choc-full of some tasty bookmarks for you.



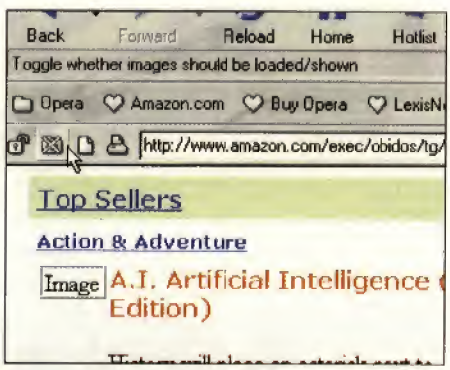
4 Quicker searching

The search bar allows you to cut straight to the information you want from the Opera interface. It boasts a selection of different search engines, which can be called upon from the drop-down menu. Type your keyword and click 'Search'.



5 Translation station

A useful facility accessed by hotclicking (see step 9) is the Translate tool. This allows you to look up any word you come across online and translate it. Simply click 'Translate' and then choose the language.

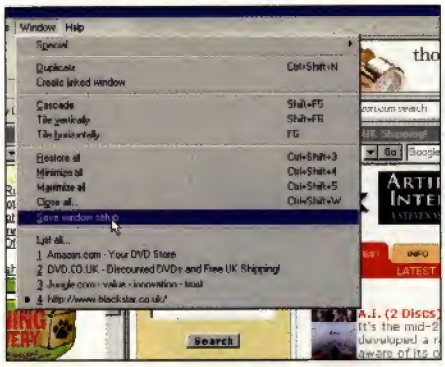


6 Turn off images

Slow-loading pages often result from sites that contain scores of pictures. Luckily, Opera makes it a cinch to turn images on and off in order to speed up your surfing. Simply click on the icon in the main toolbar to toggle images on or off.

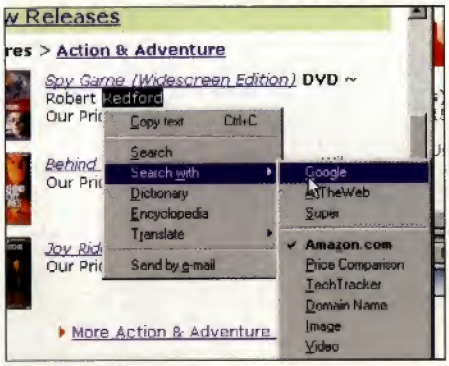
7 Multiple windows

One of Opera's finest assets is its ability to display multiple windows at the same time. To open up a new window, first click on the 'New' icon in the toolbar then choose 'Tile Vertically' from the 'Window' menu to display them.



8 Position the windows

You can now navigate each window individually and also resize them or position them anywhere within the main interface. Once you have them set up, click on the 'Windows' menu and choose 'Save window setup' for future use.

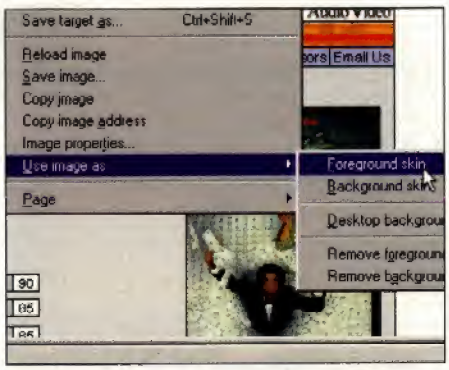


9 Introducing Hotclicking

This latest version of Opera comes with the new 'Hotclick' feature. By double-clicking on any word or phrase on a Web page you can bring up a list of options. The Search option allows you to find other sites about this word or phrase.

10 Preview pages

By clicking the 'Print Preview' icon you can find out what a Web page will look like on A4. Once you're happy it will look suitable when printed, choose 'Print' from the File menu. To return to the Web, click the 'Print Preview' icon again.



11 Customise the browser

Another neat feature of Opera is that it lets you take a picture from the Web and use it to change the face of your browser. Right-click the image you want and select 'Use image as' and 'Foreground skin' from the pop-up menu.

12 Download new skins

If your customisation efforts failed miserably or you fancy a change, you can download new skins by right-clicking the main toolbar and choosing 'Get skins'. Simply click on the download link to save the new skin to your interface.

Jargon buster

Official Opera home page

www.opera.com

This official site gives you all the latest news on the software and features downloadable versions of Opera for virtually any platform you could think of. The MyOpera Community page contains a portal that gives you access to program-related links and information. There's also a forum that lets you communicate with other users of the browser.

Operacer

www.geocities.com/operacer

Well-organised collection of resources dedicated to the super-fast browser. You can access FAQs and forums, plug-ins and tools for Opera. Plus, the site contains a useful database of sites where you can obtain skins for the browser along with a guide to creating your own.

Search Engine World

www.searchengineworld.com/opera

A site with reams of insightful information about Opera, Search Engine World's 'Opera Fun' service is easy to navigate as it is structured into subject categories. The 'Tip of the day' page is a useful way of getting to know the program a little better.

Top Tip!

Using mouse gestures

Mouse gestures' are a useful timesaving feature offered by Opera. These allow you to control the browser in a very natural way through specific movements of the mouse. You simply hold down the right mouse button and drag the mouse in a particular direction, according to what you want to do. By moving it down you open a new window, left opens the previous page, right moves to the next page, up and then down reloads the page, and so on. Why not try out some mouse manoeuvres and see exactly how much easier it makes things, compared to the point-and-click slog of Internet Explorer and Netscape?

In brief:
Task: Cover your Internet tracks
Software I need: Tracks Eraser on the CD
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 30 minutes

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Concealing your browser history

USE TRACKS ERASER TO MAKE SURE NO ONE CAN SEE WHICH SITES YOU'VE VISITED

WHENEVER YOU USE a Web browser, the computer will keep an internal log of the sites you've visited, making it easier to return to the same site later. While this can be good if you're researching something – perhaps you're making regular visits to the home page of Amazon.co.uk while hunting for presents – it can also make it easy for others to see where you've been.

Featured on this month's CD in its full-version glory, Tracks Eraser works with Internet Explorer, AOL, MSN, Opera and Netscape Communicator. In its most basic form, the program allows you to delete Web site cookies, remove your Internet cache and will delete both the internal Web site history and that offered through the Location Bar.

Tracks Eraser also offers basic functionality to make the removing history details within Windows easier – including your file open history, document list, recycle bin and a variety of others. This can be useful if you've downloaded a picture of any goods you may have bought as it ensures the file cannot be recovered and viewed.

Tracks Eraser is good for removal of the basic Internet track details, but what about the plug-ins that form an essential part of the Web browsing experience? Without the ability to view PDFs, access Real movies and play audio data, Web browsing becomes considerably slower and less interesting.

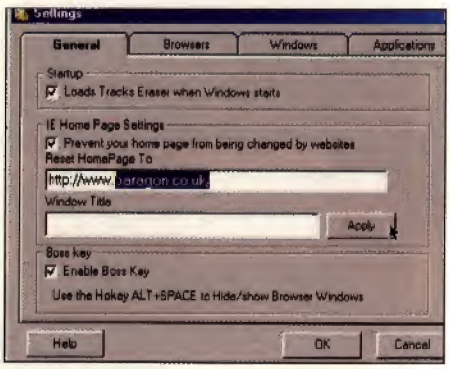
Plug and play

Tracks Eraser Pro has been developed to take into consideration plug-ins within Web browsers, and allows the removal of used file details from Acrobat, CuteFTP, OfficeXP, WinZip and many other companion applications to your Internet system. Full details on freely available plug-ins are at **www.acesoft.net/plugins.htm** as well as details of how you can make your own.

If you decide to upgrade to Tracks Eraser Pro, you'll be able to selectively delete items from the Internet cache, history, cookies, location bar history and the auto complete form details. Additional functionality has been added to allow for scheduled removal of Internet files, along with the means to securely erase files (by writing random data on top of the file location on your hard disk), speed up your hard disk through the availability of disk space, and protect your Web page. For details of how to upgrade, visit **www.acesoft.net**.

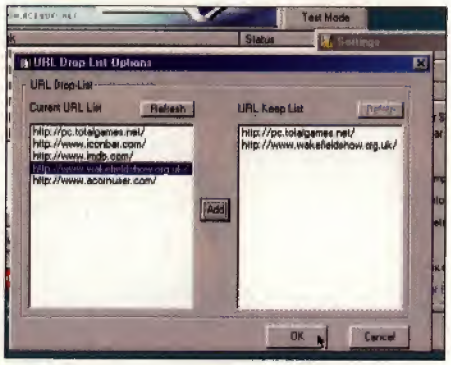
1 Get started

Install Tracks Eraser from the cover disc. If you're presented with a window inviting you to trial the product, click 'Try More' to gain access to the program itself. If you're happy with how it works and would like to register, click 'Register'.



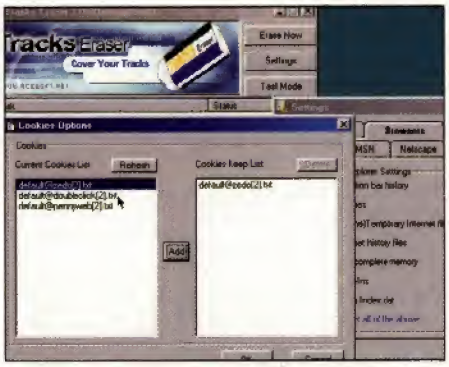
2 Set up the application

Click 'Settings'. Within the General tab, ensure there's a tick in the 'Startup' and 'Boss Key' fields so Tracks Eraser will run in the background and provides a quick hide function. Within 'Home Page settings' enter your default home page.



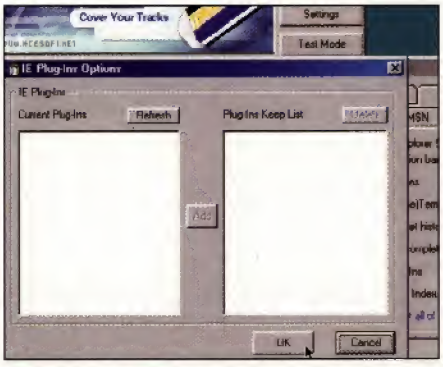
3 URL drop-down list

Click the 'Browser' tab. Notice there are four options underneath – 'Internet Explorer', 'Netscape', 'Opera' and 'AOL' corresponding to the different Web browsers. Click 'Options' and from the new window, select any URLs to retain.



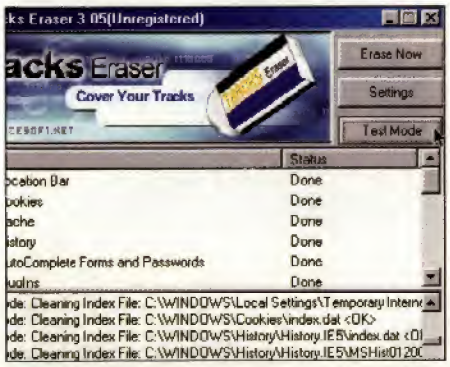
4 Active cookies

Web browsers use cookies as a local storage for your preferences while viewing a Web site. If you'd rather delete them, click the 'Options' box next to 'Cookies' and then select those you wish to retain.



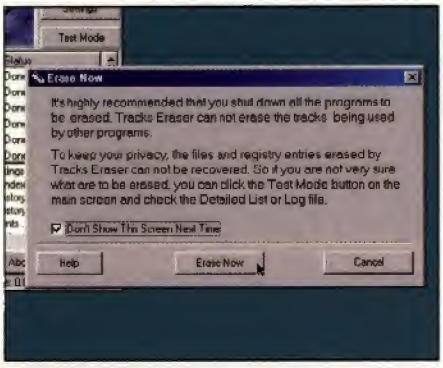
5 IE plug-in list

When browsing, you may find the computer downloads a plug-in that you've never asked for nor need. Tracks Eraser allows you to remove these – they'll appear in the left-hand window. Flash or Shockwave should always be retained.



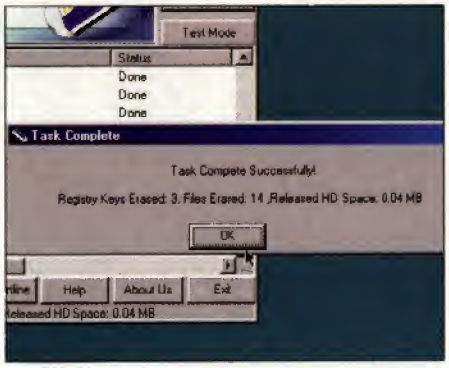
6 Test mode

With the basic settings in place, let's see which files Tracks Eraser will remove. Click 'Test Mode' and wait while Tracks Eraser searches through your hard disk. You'll be presented with a list of files Tracks Eraser can remove.



7 Erase

Check through the test run. You can view this log within NotePad by clicking 'View Log'. When you've checked you want all the files deleted, click 'Erase Now'. The program will ask you to confirm, at which point click 'Erase Now'.



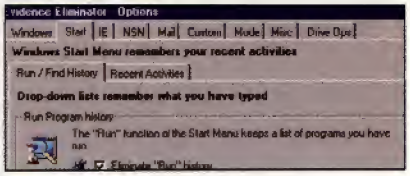
8 Task complete

After a few minutes, Tracks Eraser will finish deleting your files, presenting you with the above screen. Your machine should now run a little bit faster due to more free disk space and the fact there's less data in the registry.

9 Buy online

If you're happy with Tracks Eraser, why not upgrade to Tracks Eraser Pro? Do this by clicking 'Buy Online', which will take you to a registration page. A description of the benefits is offered there, which we'll summarise in the following steps.

Keep it clean...



Evidence Eliminator

www.evidence-eliminator.com

As featured on the *Practical Internet* cover disc a short while ago, Evidence Eliminator is a comprehensive tool for removing all evidence of the sites you've visited. It's quite expensive in its latest form, so download the trial before you buy.

OnTrack DataEraser

www.ontrack.com

OnTrack DataEraser is a comprehensive tool for speeding up your PC, including basic functionality for the removal of Internet data. There are better options available, but as a cheap solution that will also speed up your hard disk, this does offer value for money.

Window Washer

www.webroot.com

Window Washer is another package allowing for customised removal of files, directories and folders from your hard disk. Plug-ins are supplied to ensure that pretty much any type of file can have evidence removed from its parent application.

Tip!

IF YOU'RE WONDERING which files Tracks Eraser would remove from your hard disk when it's run, why not first try the test run feature? To do this, click 'Test Run'. Notice that the hard disk activity light flashes, and within a few moments you'll be provided with details of each file that Tracks Eraser will remove.

Jargon buster

Cookie
Cookies are used within Web browsers to store information required by Web sites. Usually it's details of your most recent purchases, when you last visited the site, and so on but virtually anything can be stored within a cookie.

AutoComplete
With recent versions of Internet Explorer, if you come across a form, the package will invite you to carry through the AutoComplete wizard; allowing for future automatic completion of forms. It's not always helpful, and can sometimes place the wrong data into the wrong fields.

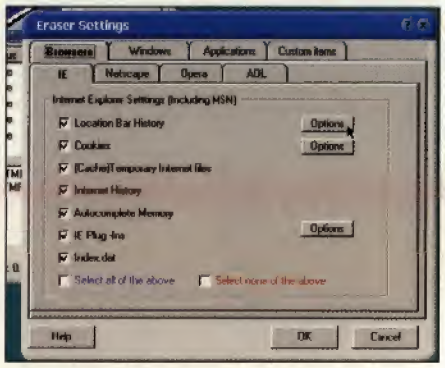
Windows Registry
Whenever a piece of software is installed onto your computer, it needs a central location to place details of file locations, file types and actions when a file of a certain type is double-clicked. This location is the Windows Registry, and it is central to the successful operation of Windows software.

File List
Every major application running under Windows has a file list, providing details of perhaps the last ten files you accessed; but no conceivable way of removing them from the list. Tracks Eraser will interact with the Windows registry to provide for easy removal of such files.

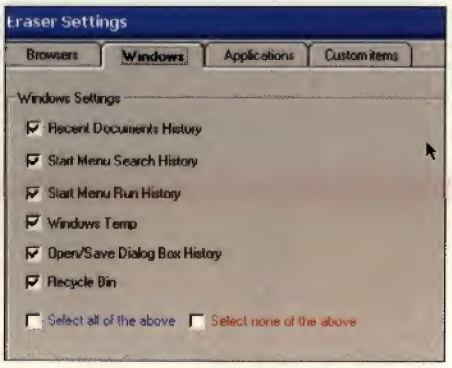
Web resources

Privacy.net
The Privacy.net Web site includes a variety of links and articles covering many aspects of Internet and personal privacy and how you can improve your own privacy.

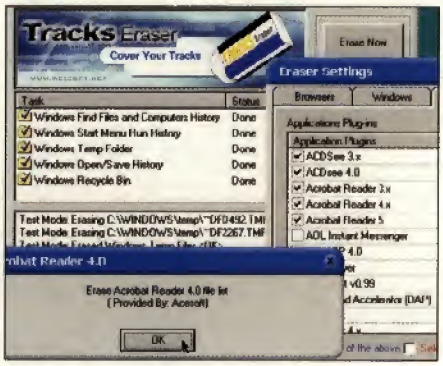
Privacy.org
The Privacy.org Web site is concerned with stories of how privacy is being infringed upon, but it can provide ideas of the sorts of things to protect against.



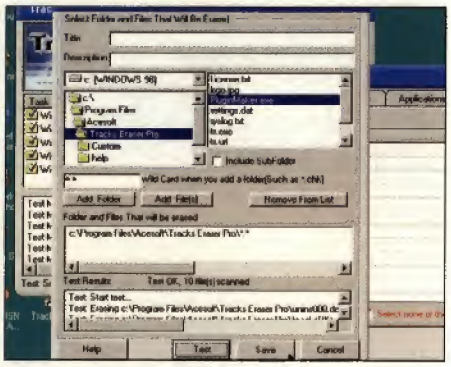
10 Tracks Eraser Pro
Install the Tracks Eraser Pro trial from the cover disc. Tracks Eraser Pro has the look and feel of a Windows XP application, but this is the same irrespective of which system it's run under. Click 'Eraser Settings' then select your browser.



11 Windows settings
Click the 'Windows' tab, and choose the records you want removed. If you're looking to speed up your system and little else, select 'Windows TMP files' and 'Recycle Bin'. Click on the 'Applications' tab to continue.

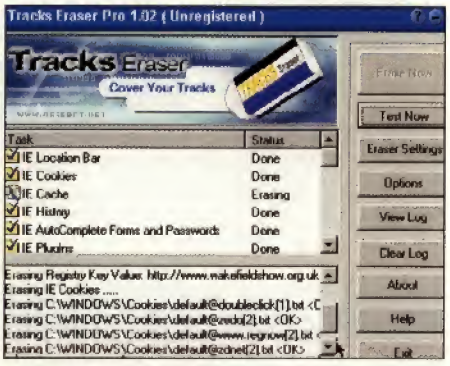


12 Application plug-ins
Tracks Eraser Pro includes a system of plug-ins, which caters for pretty much any Windows application. Click on any plug-in, then choose 'Plug-In Info' for details of the originator of the plug-in.



13 Custom items
In this new version, Tracks Eraser Pro allows you to add applications and/or single files to the erase list. Single files will be removed if they're present on your system, and you can do a wildcard search for folders to delete them.

14 Custom information
If you add more than one custom item to your system, ensure you include an adequate description. Custom items are listed alphabetically in the 'Custom Items' list and the description field can be viewed by clicking 'Info'.



15 Files begone
Having set all of the appropriate attributes for your requirements, click 'Erase Now'. The program runs slightly quicker than its baby brother, and within a few seconds everything will be complete.

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In brief:
Task: Get to grips with Google Groups
Software I need: A Web browser
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: As long as you need

Get into newsgroups with Google Groups

EXPLORE THE MURKY WORLD OF NEWSGROUPS WITH THE HELP OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SEARCH ENGINE

ANYONE LOOKING FOR expert information on an obscure topic will find that one of the best places to find it is in the weird and wonderful world of newsgroups and not, as convention may suggest, on the World Wide Web.

Many years ago, newsgroups were an exciting and thriving area of the Internet. In the last few years, however, their profile has declined as Web-based forums and instant messaging programs have distracted Internet users. But newsgroups are back in vogue again, mainly due to the one-dimensional nature of much of the Web's content and the rise of file-sharing.

Heavy metal

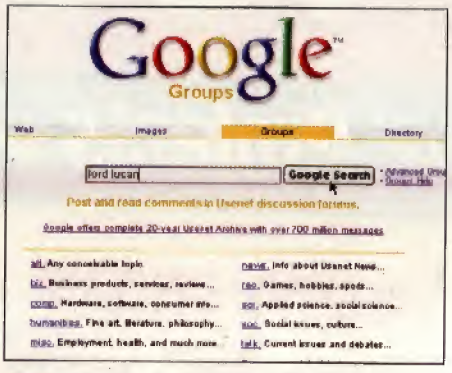
Newsgroups have been around since 1979 and are essentially discussion groups that allow people to hold electronic conversations about topics as obscure as Japanese heavy metal and as mundane as teabags. It's all pretty archaic – a throwback to the Net's formative years – but surprisingly popular. Nobody is sure how many newsgroups there are, but they are divided into several sections, or hierarchies as they are known (more on them later), and collected under the umbrella term 'Usenet'. You'll find newsgroups on almost any subject you could care to mention and on plenty of subjects you probably never even thought existed too!

The conventional way of accessing and participating in newsgroups is to use a program called a newsreader. Outlook Express is the most popular example of a program that can download Usenet postings and add your two penny's worth to a discussion group, although there are other, more dynamic programs available. But we're not going to look at using a conventional newsreader here. Instead we're going to turn our attentions to Google's fantastic Groups service, which has archived hundreds of thousands of Usenet postings dating back to 1981.

The Google dimension

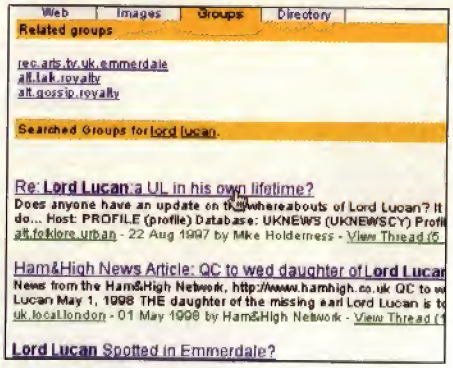
If you have never visited **www.google.com** you've clearly been living in the wilderness for the last few years, either that or this is your first foray into the Net. Google is one of the best search engines on the Net and also offers a facility that allows Net users to search newsgroups and even, for registered users, to make postings.

In this tutorial we'll show you how to use Google Groups to research specific information, how to make postings of your own and how to survive in an environment that demands the strictest codes of Netiquette be observed at all times.



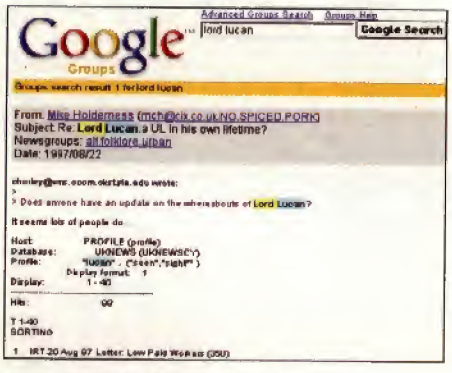
1 Starting a search

Go to **www.google.com**. When the page has loaded, click the 'Groups' tab'. Once you've reached the Google Groups page, type a search term into the search box and hit 'Return'. We reckon a search for Lord Lucan is as good as any.



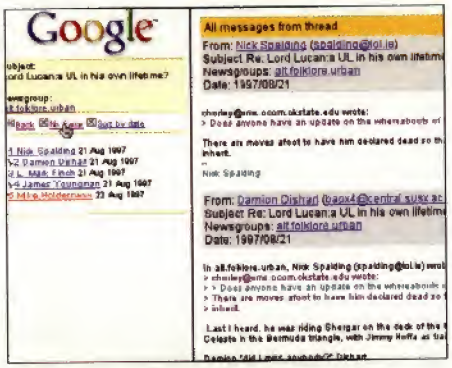
2 View a post

According to Google, Lucan is residing in the **alt.folklore.urban** newsgroup. Google returns search results based on their relevancy so the posting at the top is likeliest to be the most useful. Click on the blue link to read a posting.



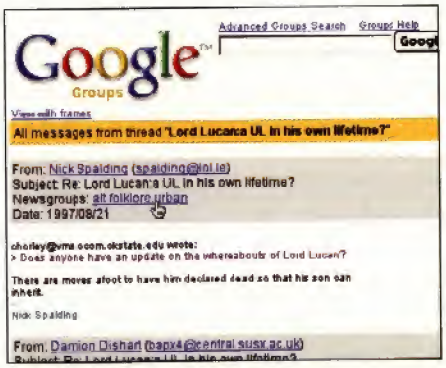
3 Find the thread

We've struck gold with our first search: here's a long list of Lucan-related sightings and stories. Any replies to a newsgroup posting are called threads. To see every reply to this posting click on 'View Complete thread'.



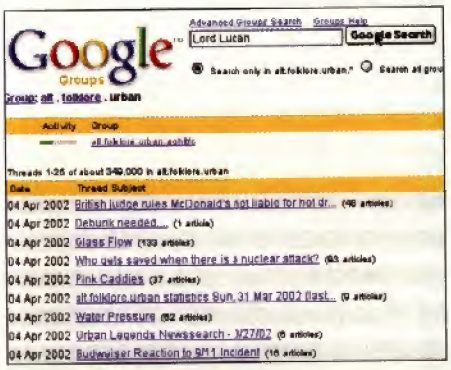
4 Pull threads together

Here's the complete thread, in chronological order. On the left you'll see various options pertaining to how the thread is sorted and displayed onscreen. On the right is the option to view each posting on its own.



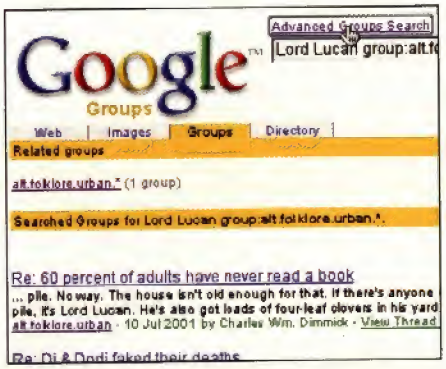
5 Visit a newsgroup

So far we've demonstrated how easy it is to find information. If you've found some useful stuff on a favourite topic why not visit the newsgroup in question and see what else you can harvest? Do this by clicking on the newsgroup link as shown.



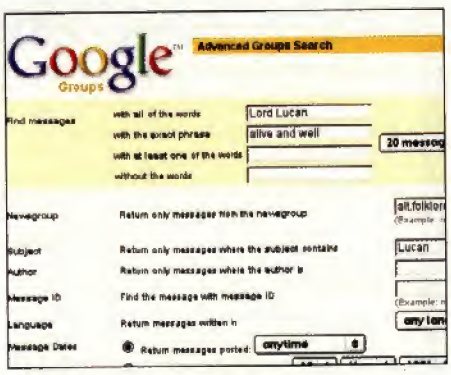
6 Navigate around a group

We're now in the alt.folklore.urban newsgroup and again the postings are archived in chronological order. There are thousands of these, so you can use the search box at the top to search within the group.



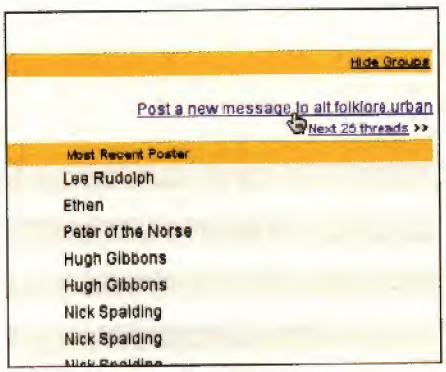
7 Advanced searches

We've performed a search for Lord Lucan-related posts in this newsgroup and here are the results. If a scrap of information is evading you, use the advanced search facility. Click the link at the top of the page to do so.



8 Hone a search

When the next window opens you'll see various pull-down menus and modifiers that can dig out buried nuggets of information. Type in the relevant information and click on the 'Google Search' button for more productive searching.



9 Post a message

Once you've found a newsgroup that fits your interest, you'll probably want to make a posting of your own. This can be done by clicking on the 'Post a new message to…' link when you're browsing through the postings in a newsgroup.

Jargon buster

Newsgroup
These are Internet discussion groups and they exist on thousands of different topics.

Usenet
An umbrella term for the whole spectrum of newsgroups and an area of the Internet in itself. The only way to access Usenet, apart from using Google Groups, is with a dedicated news browser.

Posting
The newsgroup equivalent of sending an email; it's the process of sending a message to a discussion group.

Flamed
If you make a stupid or ignorant posting or breach the strict rules of Netiquette you will be flamed, which is when you get sent a posting from a fellow newsgroup user making derogatory or rude remarks about your behaviour.

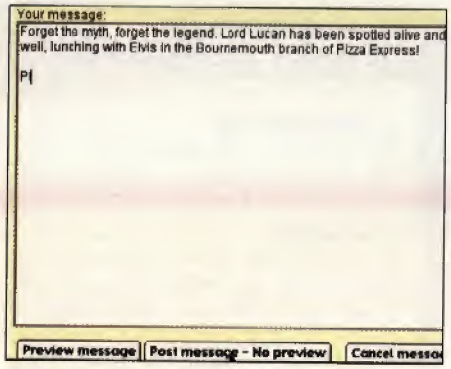
FAQ
Short for Frequently Asked Questions, this is essentially a list of information about a newsgroup presented in a question and answer format for the benefit of a newsgroup newcomer.

Spam
Nefarious junk email received from direct marketeers who have have harvested your email address (see below).

Tip!

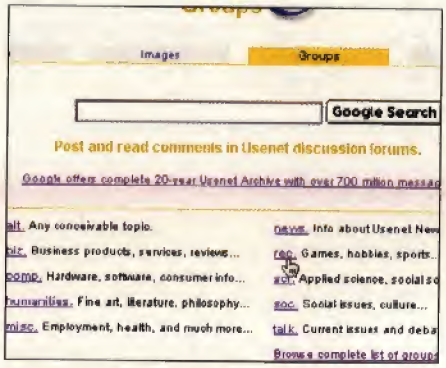
Can the spam

ONE DRAWBACK OF Usenet is that spammers trawl it incessantly to harvest potential email addresses for junk mail purposes. If you want to prevent your Inbox from becoming a welcoming haven for every get-rich-quick scam under the sun, it's wise to take precautions when you post to a newsgroup. One way of doing this is to disguise your email address so that the 'spambots' that harvest email addresses are fooled, but anyone else will be sharp enough to realise what your real address is. Displaying your email address as **jo@spammersgotohell.bloggs.com** or something similar should help genuine emailers work out what your address is.



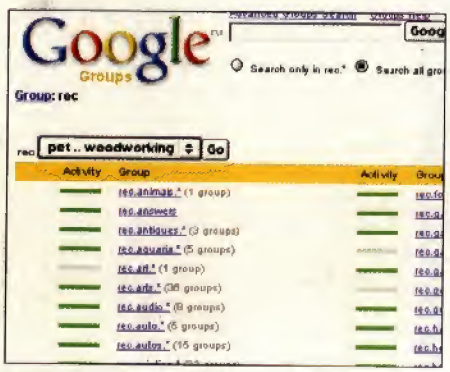
10 Have your say

You'll need to register before you can make a posting, but once that's out the way, you can use this form to compose your message. Keep your subject short, concise and readable. Hit 'Post message' or choose to preview your post first.



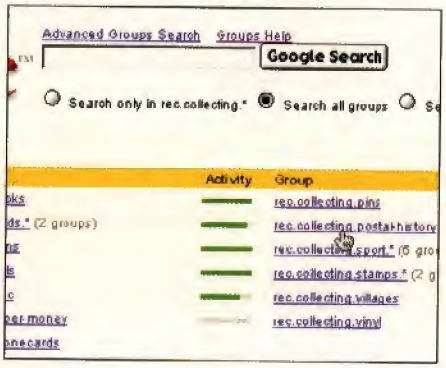
11 Browse the hierarchies

If you just want to browse through postings, return to the Google Groups home page and look through the newsgroup categories or 'hierarchies' by clicking through the links. It should be easy to match an interest with a hierarchy.



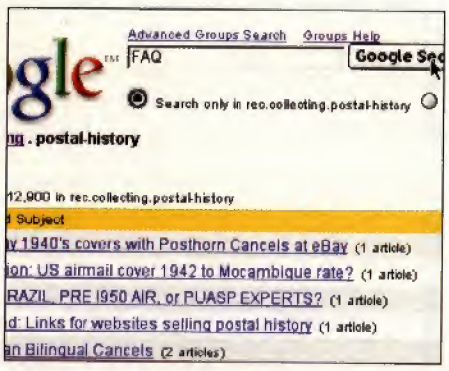
12 Find a subject

We're in the **.rec** hierarchy, which covers recreational activities. The green bars next to each group indicate how much activity is going on. The further across the green bar is, the more active the newsgroup is.



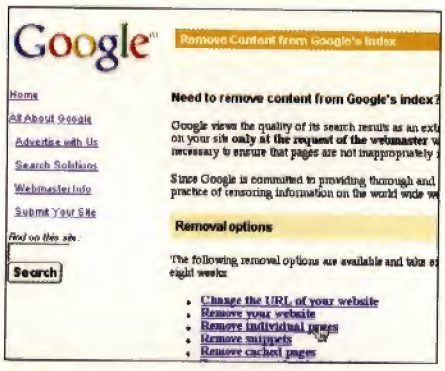
13 Find a group

There are plenty of sub-categories within each hierarchy – finding what you want is a bit like sifting through the directories on a PC. We want to find out more about stamp collecting so we're going to hit the **rec.collecting.postal-history** link.



14 Good Netiquette

Never post stupid questions or one that has been asked millions of times before. To avoid this happening, hunt through a newsgroup to find the FAQ file using the search box at the top of the page. Most newsgroups have these.



15 Remove a posting

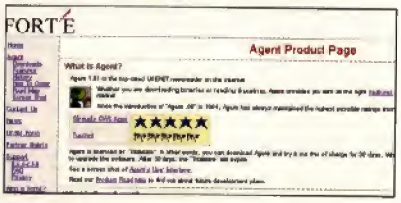
Because Google has archived almost every Usenet posting since 1981, seasoned Net users may find an embarrassing post of their own preserved. Find out how to remove it by visiting: **http://groups.google.com/googlegroups/**

Web resources

News.newsusers.questions

www.plig.net/nnq/nnqlinks.html

This Web-based newsgroup has been set up specifically to introduce Net users to Usenet. Within its pages you'll find a comprehensive list of do's and don'ts, advice on how to start making postings and, more importantly, where to start making your first postings – yes, there really is a newsgroup specifically for making test postings.



Agent

www.forteinc.com/agent/index.php

Want to experience Usenet in the way it should be experienced? Then you need a dedicated newsreader and Agent is one of the best. This program will allow you to download binaries (newsgroups full of files and images), read postings and make postings of your own. The program costs $29, although a free version is available.

Mind your P's and Q's

IF YOU'RE PLANNING to start posting to newsgroups, it's essential you practise good Netiquette. This refers to the codes and conventions of Net communication. Netiquette needs to be practised in email, chat rooms and newsgroups, but if you get it wrong in the latter, there's a good chance you'll get flamed by irate Usenet veterans. In general it's best not to ask stupid questions. You'll also need to keep your emails concise and to the point; rambling emails will not be tolerated and nor will signature files that go on forever. Bear in mind that newsgroup postings should be in plain text and should not contain image files or coloured backgrounds. Finally, make sure you write well; poor spelling and block capital typing will quickly be ridiculed.

In brief:
Task: Protect your PC from hackers
Software I need: Firekeys 4.0 – full version on the CD
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: 15 minutes

Practical Internet IT'S ON THE CD

Protect your PC with the multi-talented Firekeys

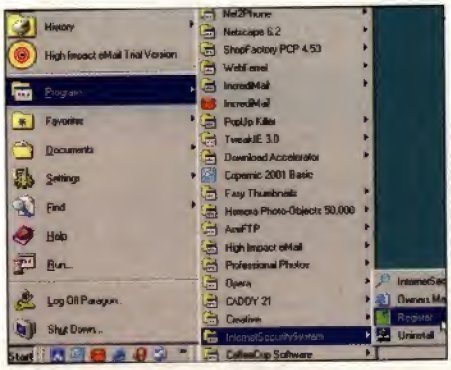
WITH SO MANY THREATS TO YOUR PC AND ONLINE PRIVACY, IT MAKES SENSE TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS. LET THIS VERITABLE SWISS ARMY KNIFE OF A PROGRAM SHOW YOU HOW

INTERNET SECURITY AND privacy are two issues that we're always banging on about here at *Practical Internet* and for good reason. A quick read through this issue's cover story on page 44 – Revealed! The People in Control of The Net – shows what could happen and who might benefit if you let your guard down.

This tutorial is all about Firekeys, a nifty program that can help give power back to Net users. Among the many tools, you'll find a personal Firewall for preventing your PC from being accessed by hackers, a feature that allows you to block pop-up adverts and banners and a useful facility for browsing the Net anonymously.

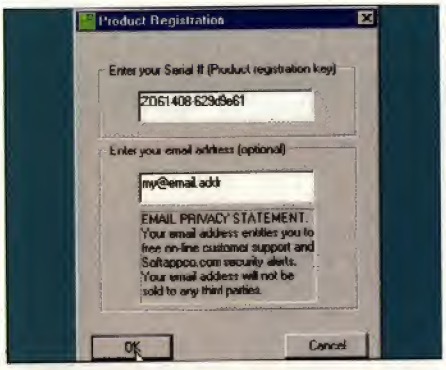
Better still, you'll find a fully-working version of the program on this month's cover CD.

If you find this version of Firekeys useful, the latest version of the program – Firekeys 5.0 – adds anti-virus protection to its impressive roll call of features. We've also included a trial of this on this on the disc, so see what you think.



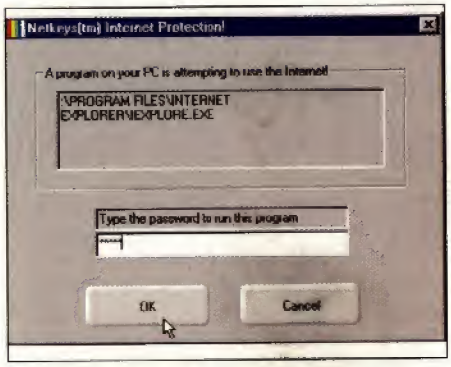
1 Install Firekeys

Install Firekeys from the cover CD, paying attention to the part about Microsoft Networking. Restart your PC and you'll see that Firekeys has been added to the Programs menu under 'Internet Security System'. Select the 'Register' option.



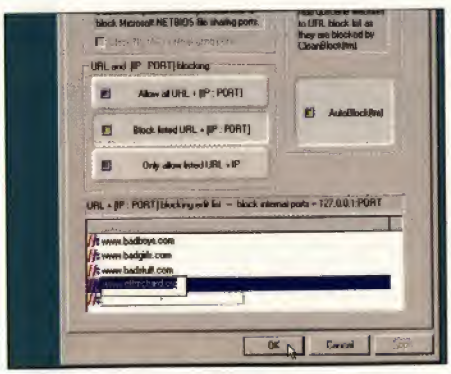
2 Unlock the program

This is the Product Registration dialog box. Type the following code in (minus the quotes): '**Z061408-629d9e61**'. Now hit 'OK'. Firekeys will connect to the Net and register the program – you now have a fully-working Firewall.



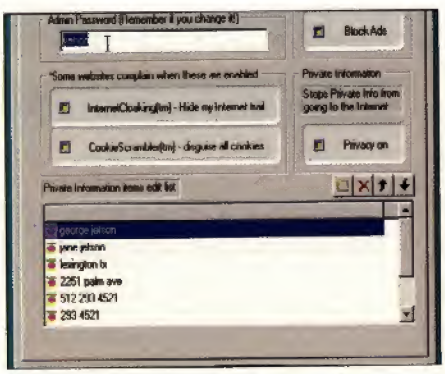
3 What's the password?

Every time you run Firekeys you'll be asked for a password – the default password is 'yahoo'. Run any Internet software with Firekeys installed and you'll also be asked for a password. This prevents other people accessing the Net.



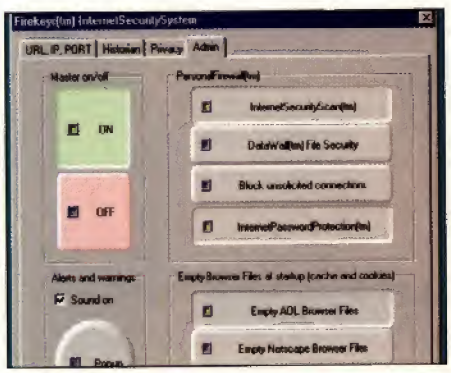
4 Fiddle with the settings

Access the Firekeys Settings menu by right-clicking on the icon in your System Tray. The first tab allows you to block Web sites and IP ports. Add addresses to the list by typing a Web address into an empty field. Hit 'OK' when done.



5 Keep it private

The Privacy tab lets you change the default passwords assigned to administering the program and using Internet software. You can also block pop-up windows and adverts, plus mask your IP address. Once you've finished fiddling, click 'OK'.



6 Further options

The admin tab contains options to help take control of your surfing. Turn the program on or off here, enable 'InternetPasswordProtection' and empty files from the AOL browser cache. Bash the 'OK' button to save your settings.

In brief:
Task: Get rid of Net irritants
Software I need: StartPage Guard, Ad-aware, Spam Buster, Mailto Obfuscator
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 1 hour

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Axe banner ads, can spam and smash spyware

USE THIS STREETWISE ADVICE TO PREVENT THE NET'S CHIEF IRRITANTS FROM RUINING THE TIME YOU SPEND ONLINE

USING THE NET is not without its irritations, and nothing gets our goat more than those prying, manipulative spammers. No matter how vigilant you are, it seems these muppets can always come up with something new and more vulgar to invade your system.

Spam has long been an issue for anyone in the world who has an email account. Despite frequent attempts to bolster email clients with spam filtering capabilities, these time-wasting junk mails still manage to slip through. With more and more junk mail being created daily, we give you a full rundown on getting the best from Spam Buster. While we're at it, we'll also show you how to prevent spambots getting email info from your site.

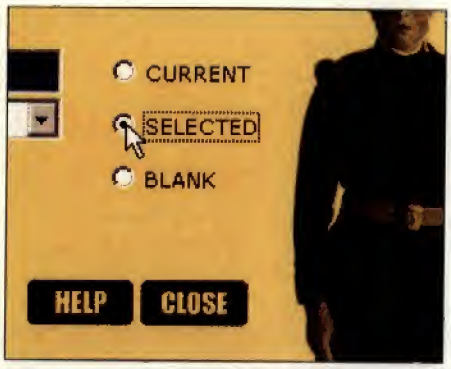
As if normal spam wasn't enough, spyware and start page alterers are examples of spamming taken into the 21st Century. Both of these involve tiny applets or files being sent to your PC, altering the way it works to benefit the coder. Thankfully, there are ways around this, so read on to find out what you need to know to live a spam-free life.

1 The main screen

After installing StartPage Guard, you'll see this screen. Although it doesn't look like much, this tiny interface houses everything you need to ensure that your browser start page isn't changed without your permission. So, let's get to work on it.

2 Enter a home page

Before tinkering with any of the more advanced settings of the program, start by entering a home page. Enter a URL in the blank text box as shown above – obviously choose wisely, as we'll make this your default home page.



3 Select 'Selected'

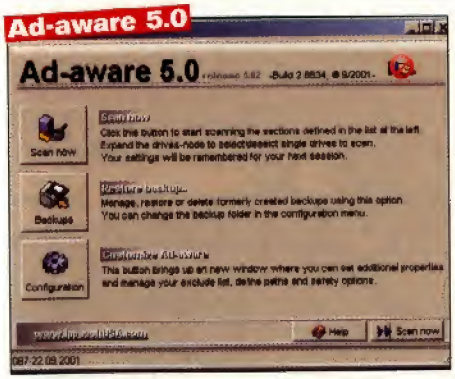
Now we'll have to tell StartPage Guard that we want this URL to be classed as the new home page. Although it should have been done automatically, make sure the 'Selected' button is selected to the right of the URL you've just entered.

4 Windows integration

For the ultimate in start page security, make sure you tick the 'Check StartPage when Windows starts' box. This means that StartPage Guard is run on Windows start-up, allowing it to check for attempted home page changes instantly.

5 Revert to selected

Now StartPage Guard is integrated into the Windows start-up procedure, you might as well tick the 'Revert to selected without notification' box. This gives the program carte blanche to correct any home page changes without asking you first.

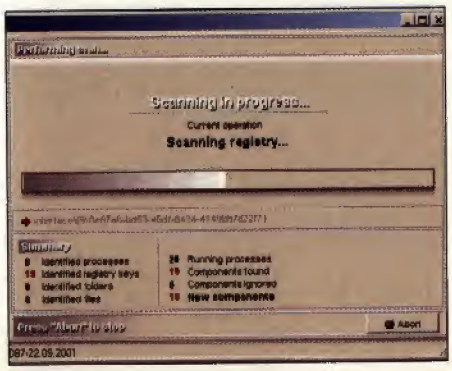


6 The Ad-aware interface

After installing Ad-aware, you will see the above screen, which masquerades as the main interface. There are three main options to the program, but you only need to make use of one to get rid of spyware on your PC.

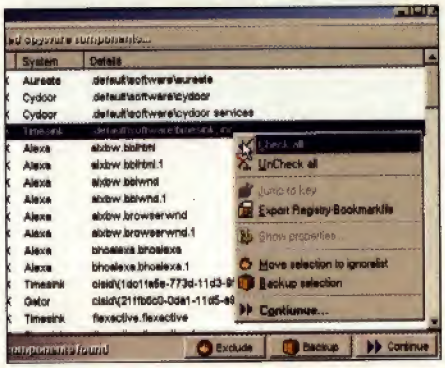
7 What to scan

Before starting the first scan, you first have to decide which parts of your hard drive should be scanned. For a full scale scan, tick the 'My computer' box at the top of the window. Otherwise, choose your destinations manually.



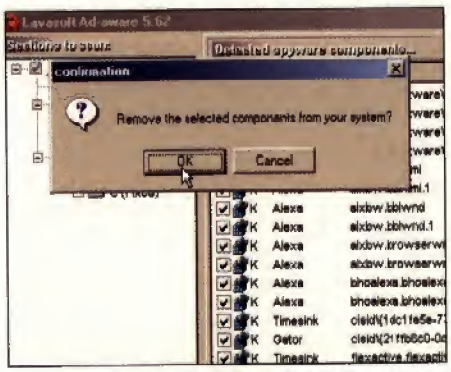
8 Scan now

Now you've selected which parts of your hard drive to scan, you can start the event itself. To kick off a scan, click on the 'Scan now' button towards the top of the interface. This will start the process, which could take up to ten minutes.



9 Results!

When your results come up (we found 85 instances of spyware on our PC), press 'Continue'. On the next screen, where the Registry entries are shown, right-click and choose 'Check all'. This makes deleting spyware much easier.



10 Delete spyware

Having selected all of the spyware found by Ad-aware, all you need to do now is press 'Continue' at the bottom-right. This will remove the spyware from your PC once and for all, leaving you with a far cleaner, faster and safer computer.

11 Spyware begone

After a couple of minutes, you'll see this screen, telling you the spyware has been eliminated. We'd suggest you restart just to enforce the Registry changes you've just made. Once you've done this, you should be sorted.

Surf the Net without fear

Anonymous surfing

While we're on the subject of trying to prevent unscrupulous types getting their hands on your details, take it a step further by turning your browsing sessions into anonymous occasions. One of the major advantages of anonymous browsing is that you don't have to download any software or sign up for any services to enjoy the privilege – you merely browse from within the confines of a 'safe site'.

1 Visit the safe site

To browse anonymously, visit the portal site. We've gone for Anonymizer, which can be found at **www.anonymizer.com**. The company provides many services, but we're just interested in anonymous browsing.

2 Enter a URL

At the top-right of the screen, you'll see a text box next to a 'Go' button. This is what lets you start using the Internet anonymously – simply enter the URL of the site you'd like to visit, then click on 'Go'.

3 Private surfing

You'll now be taken to the site in question, with one minor difference. Above the normal window, you'll notice an additional 'Anonymizer' control panel, which features various settings for you to set up.

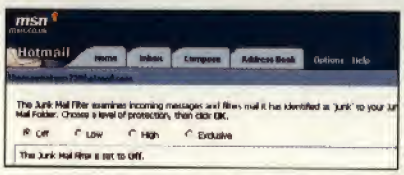
Jargon buster

Spam
This is simply any form of junk mail delivered by email. The difference with spam and snail junk mail is that you'd rarely receive more than five pieces of unwanted paper mail a day, but the speed and ease of email mean that nasty spammers can target you up to 50 times a day.

Spyware
One of the most irritating new developments to appear on the Web in recent years, this is the practice whereby companies install tiny 'spy' files on your PC unbeknownst to you when you set up their programs. The result is that they can check up on what you're doing. The main proponent of this new fad is Windows XP, which goes a bundle on spyware.

Registry
The hidden part of Windows that governs exactly how the Operating System behaves. Tweaking the registry is a favourite pastime of Windows experts the world over, but we'd only recommend looking into the practice if you have a fearless heart and a full backup of your hard drive just in case.

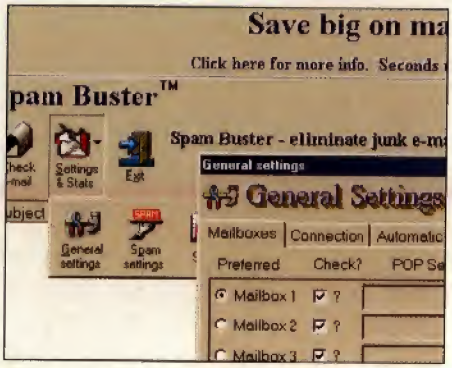
Tip!



ONE OF THE main places to find reams and reams of completely unwanted junk mail has always been on a Webmail account – Hotmail was always a major culprit. Thankfully, times have changed, and Webmail has become more sophisticated. In short, this means you no longer have to wade through hundreds of junk mail messages every time you check your Webmail account. Hotmail's new 'junk filter' option is not only pretty self-explanatory, but is also surprisingly agile and nimble at catching spam before it reaches you. Check out the Hotmail site at **www.hotmail.com** for a rundown on this impressive feature, and the difference it could mean to your Webmail existence.

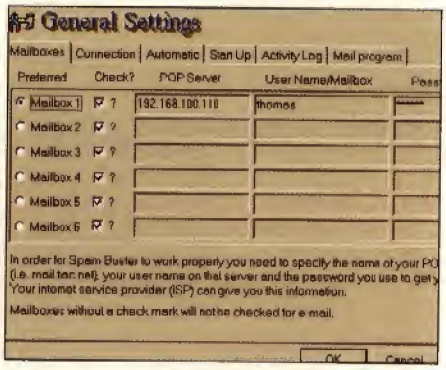
12 Install Spam Buster

When installing Spam Buster, pay attention to this screen. This is where you can define whether or not Spam Buster should be started every time Windows starts. Ticking 'Yes – install into startup group' means it will start automatically.



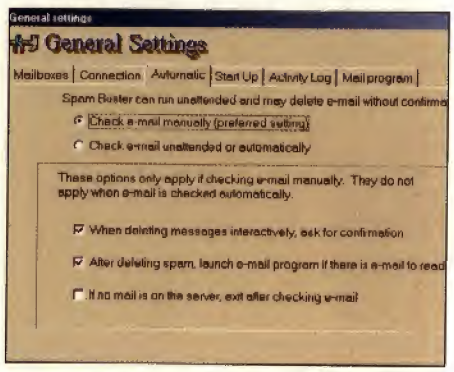
13 Alter the settings

The Spam Buster interface might be attractive, but it's no use unless you change the settings within the program. To get to the mail account information, click on 'Settings & Stats', then choose 'General settings' and 'Mailboxes'.



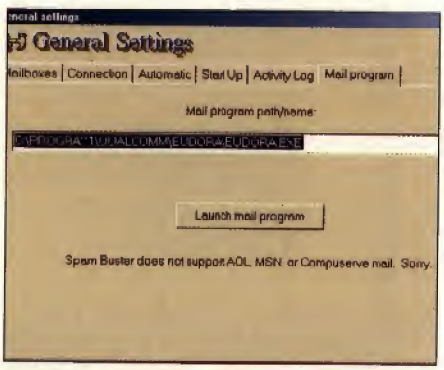
14 An email account

In the Mail Accounts window, first enter the POP server address for the email account you'd like to import – if you don't know this, check using your email client. Next up, include your user name and password to gain access to the account itself.



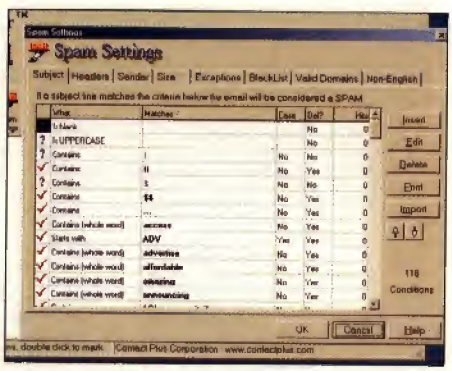
15 Automatic or manual?

After doing this, click the 'Automatic' tab. This section lets you define how much control Spam Buster has over your emails. We'd recommend keeping the 'Check email manually' box ticked, and leaving the top two settings as they are.



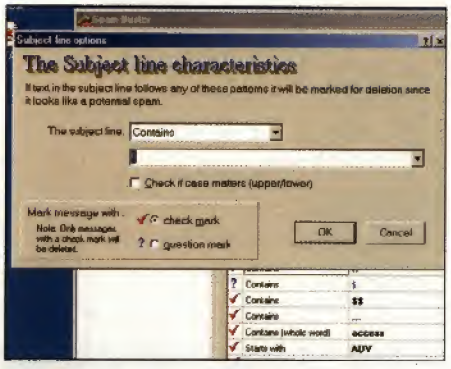
16 Set an email program

Spam Buster should automatically detect the email program you use, but it's worth checking, just to be sure. Click the 'Mail program' tab at the top, then make sure the link points to the '.exe' file of the mail client you use as your default.



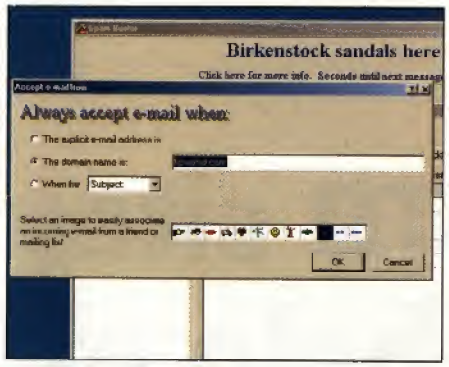
17 Spam settings

Now for the more involved part. Click 'OK' to go back to the main screen, then click 'Settings & Stats' and 'Spam Settings'. This section lets you configure Spam Buster's filtering capabilities, and tells the program which email to throw out.



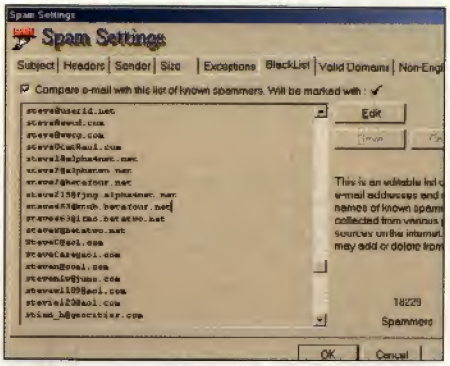
18 Edit the settings

The first screen is dedicated to the Subject heading of incoming emails. Double-click on any of the words to get more options - a tick means the email is immediately removed, while a question mark denotes a warning message.



19 Exceptions

If you tick the 'Exceptions' tab, you can define any subject headings or domain names that should always be allowed through the filter. So you know which emails fall into this category, you can even assign an individual icon to each.

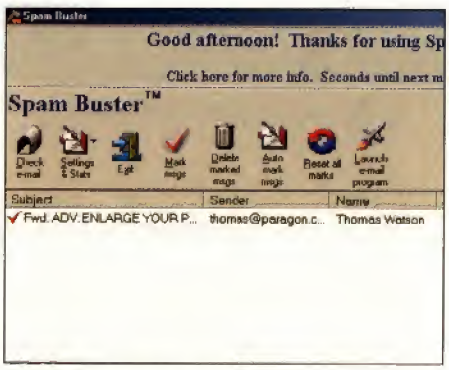


20 Blacklist

To see how Spam Buster really works, click the 'Blacklist' tab. This brings up a list of spammers currently known to Spam Buster. You can add or delete names, but it's quite good just scrolling through some of the bogus email addresses.

21 Check email

Now that the preliminaries are out of the way, it's time to get Spam Buster doing what it does best. First off, click on 'OK' to get back to the main interface, then click on the 'Check e-mail' button at the top-right of the window.



22 Filtered spam

While Spam Buster checks for new messages, one of a number of things will happen. If there is no new mail, nothing will happen. If you have been sent junk, it will be listed as above. If the new mail passes through the Spam Buster net...

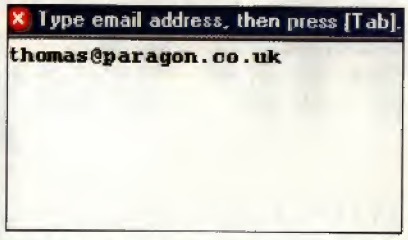
23 New mail

...you'll be taken into your default mail client. The main difference between doing this and checking your mail in the normal method is that you can be sure that you will never see one single piece of junk mail in your client again.

Secure your Web site

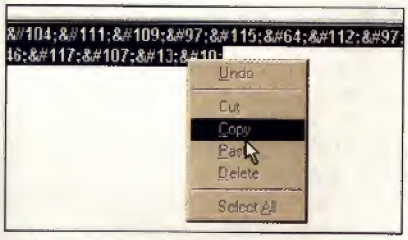
Stop spambots

In addition to being caught out by spammers and scumware perpetrators while you browse, there's another way you can be snagged. Every time you include a 'mailto' tag on a Web page, a spambot can pick up the address you've linked to and target it with spam. The wonderfully named Mailto Obfuscator disguises the linking address, making it virtually impossible for it to be picked up by a spambot.



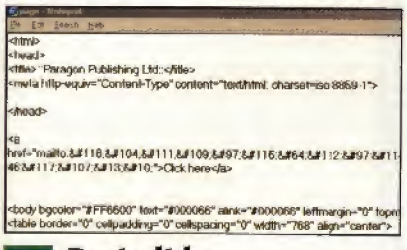
1 Open the program

Once you've installed Mailto Obfuscator, you'll notice the sparse interface – that's because simplicity is the name of the game here. Enter the email address you'd like to link to in the top window.



2 Copy the code

You'll notice that the bottom window is now filled with what seems like gibberish. This is actually the encoded link, ready to be placed into any HTML file you wish. Select the text, then right-click and choose 'Copy'.



3 Paste it in

Now paste the text into an HTML text document, making sure you include the 'mailto' part before the encrypted mail link. The link will work fine, but will be impenetrable to spambots searching for email links.

In brief:
Task: Get to know FTP Voyager
Software I need: FTP Voyager
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 20 minutes

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

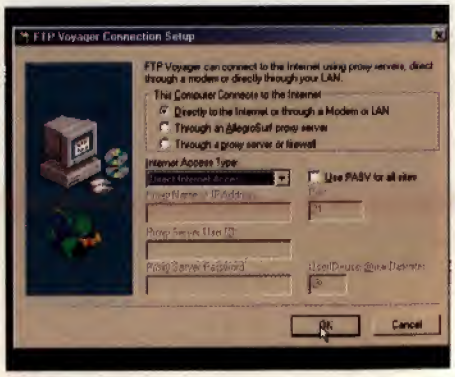
Master FTP sites with the help of FTP Voyager

YOU NEED NEVER LET AN FTP SITE SCARE YOU OFF AGAIN WITH THE HELP OF THIS DOWNLOAD DERVISH

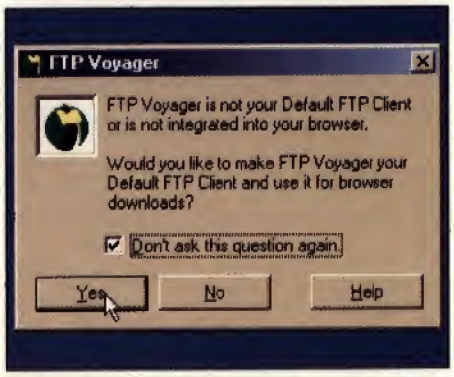
DESPITE RECENT CHANGES to Internet Explorer, FTP sites have remained something of an unfathomable mystery to the majority of Internet users. The only real experience most of us have of these types of site, is when a download link sends a file from one direct to our PC – so, although you're using an FTP site, you're barely scratching the surface of what it can do for you.

In short, FTP sites are Web space devoted entirely to providing you with files. You can forget about the HTML and graphics housed on most sites, and instead get ready for file lists similar to that you'd see in your average Windows Explorer window.

FTP Voyager is currently the best program for browsing and downloading from any number of Web sites. With a highly intuitive interface, you can easily navigate through remote sites like they were sitting on your home PC itself. What's more, the program comes supplied with a whole list of FTP sites pre-installed, which saves you the hassle of finding them yourself.



1 A connection type
During installation, you'll see this screen, where you'll be asked which kind of Net access you have. This impacts on the way FTP Voyager works, so choose this wisely. Thankfully, if you use a modem, you won't have to change any settings.

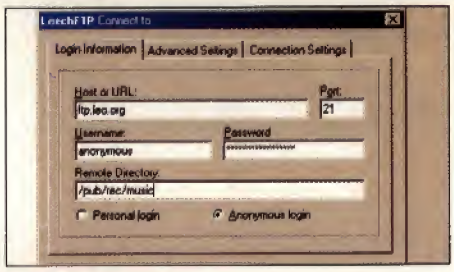


2 Make it default
Before using FTP Voyager, it's worthwhile ticking the above box to make it the default FTP client. We're normally against this principle, as it takes control away from you, but this is the best FTP client there is, so give it full reign.

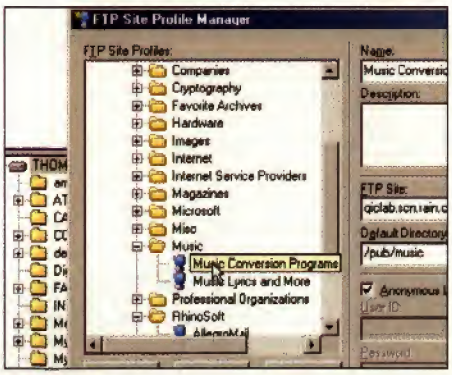
Power Users Clinic: Download from FTP sites with LeechFTP

IF YOU FIND the FTP Voyager interface too all-encompassing and confusing, there is an easier option to get into FTP sites. Boasting a more slimline feature set and slightly easier interface, LeechFTP offers a more straightforward route to viewing FTP site listings. Obviously, the less detailed manner of the program means that it's that little bit easier to pick up the basics of LeechFTP. So, with this in mind, follow the steps along this strip, and you should find yourself in receipt of a full knowledge of FTP sites in no time.

1 Connect
After installing LeechFTP from our cover CD, you'll see the main screen. As you might imagine, it looks a bit sparse with no files to browse. To fix this click on the 'Connect' icon in the main toolbar.

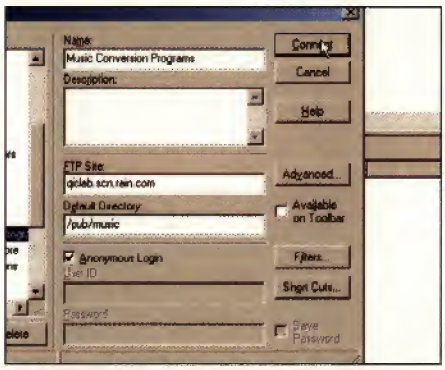


2 FTP info
While FTP Voyager makes use of a number of presets, LeechFTP requires you to enter a manual FTP site. We've gone for one of the sites from FTP Voyager anyway, just to show how LeechFTP works.



3 Connection screen

You'll now be taken to the 'Connection' window, where you can choose which pre-installed FTP site to connect to. These are all respectable sites. Browse through the list to find a site you'd like to connect to.

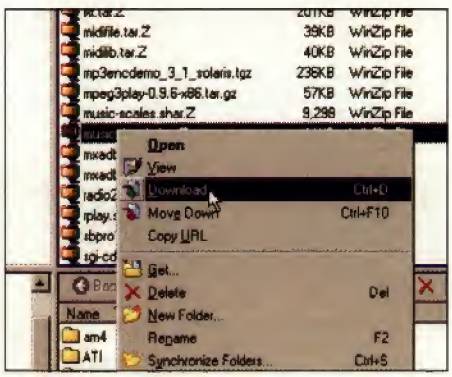


4 Connecting...

After selecting your FTP site, you're ready to connect. Because the advanced settings are selected for you, just press the 'Connect' button at the top-right. Once you've done this, a short delay will precede your connection to the FTP server.

5 The interface

Once you're connected, you'll see this main interface. The split screen will help you make sense of what's going on. Of particular interest to us at the moment are the two top windows, which show files stored on the remote server.

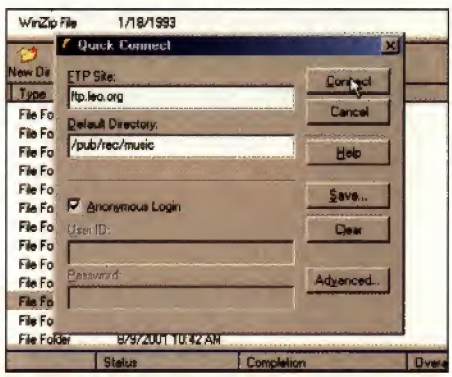


6 Downloading...

Having browsed the file list on the right to find a file, you're ready to download. The simplest method is to right-click the file in question and then choose 'Download'. This will download the file in the same way as you would with IE.

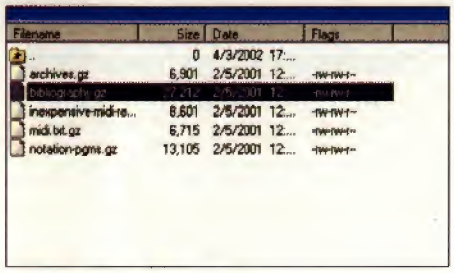
7 Quick Connect

Now that you know how to connect to and download from a preset FTP site, you can begin importing FTP sites from elsewhere. The most difficult part of this is finding a site to connect to – once you have, click the 'Quick Connect' icon.



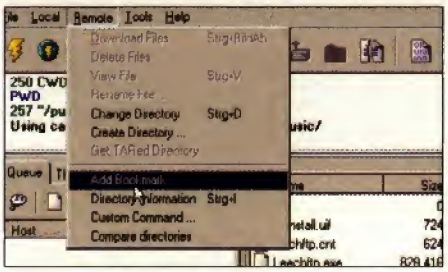
8 Add a site

This will bring up the above dialog box, where enter the details to connect to the FTP site. All you need to know is the address of the site in question, and the directory to go to on connection. Once you've done this, press 'Connect'.



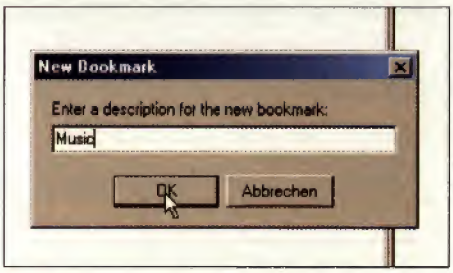
3 The file list

Just like browsing files on your PC, you can now navigate through folders stored on the remote FTP site you've just connected to. Double-click on a folder to open it up and browse through the contents held inside.



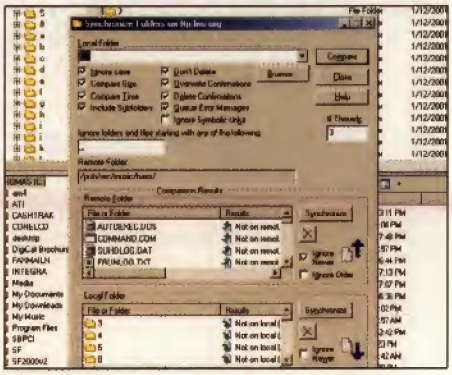
4 Bookmark it

Now you've gone to the effort of entering the FTP site details into LeechFTP, you might as well save yourself ever having to do it again by creating a bookmark for it within the program. Go to 'Remote', then choose 'Add Bookmark'.



5 Name the bookmark

The bookmark will now be saved into LeechFTP's links list. To make it easier to identify in future, it's a very good idea to rename the bookmark to something that will help you identify it quickly.



9 Synchronizing

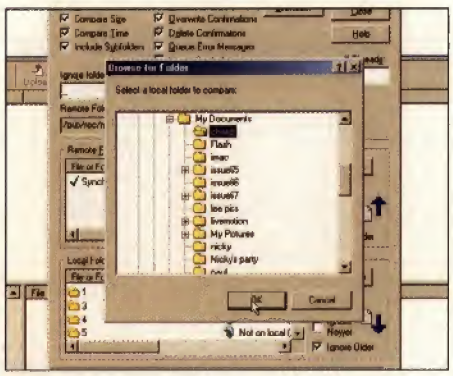
Once you've found an FTP site, it's feasible that you might want to grab everything from it, especially if you have an unmetered or broadband connection. FTP Voyager has a handy feature that allows you to do this, known as 'synchronizing'.

10 Find a site

As before, the first part of the process is to find an FTP site which contains enough stuff you want to download. Obviously, it's not worth the hassle of synchronizing if you're only going to download a couple of files.

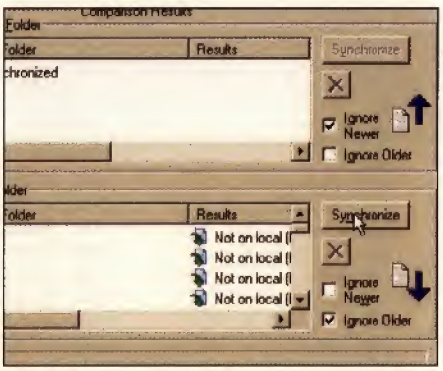
11 Choose 'synchronize'

Now, browse to the folder you'd like to copy – if the site in question has oodles of files, it might be better to synchronize by folder instead of whole sites at a time. When you've found this, right-click on it and choose 'Synchronize Folder'.



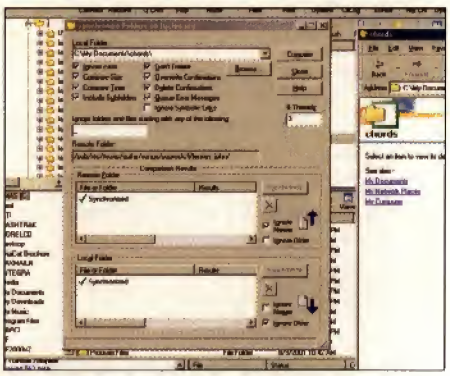
12 A destination

In the Synchronize dialog box, click on the 'Browse' button to find a folder on your hard drive to save to. Although it's spruced up as a 'local folder', all you're really doing is setting up a download destination.



13 Synchronize

Having chosen this folder, all that remains is to start the process. Make sure you click the 'Synchronize' button at the bottom – this deals with downloading, as shown by the down arrow, while the other one is for uploading.



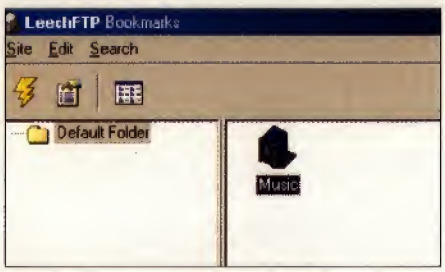
14 The synchronised files

Depending on the size of the folder you'd like to synchronise, your PC will take a while to download the files. Once it's finished, browse your local folder (or download folder) and you'll see that the files have been copied across.

Download from FTP sites with LeechFTP continued...

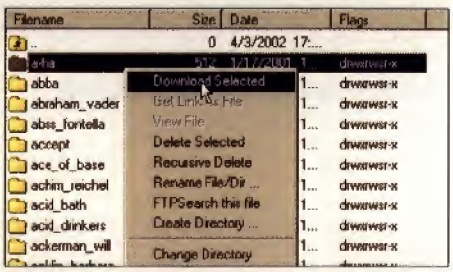
6 Find bookmarks

There's no point in saving sites as bookmarks if you're never going to be able to find them again. Take a bit of time now to get to know the quickest routes to bookmarks – go to 'File' in the main menu, then choose 'Bookmarks'.



7 The bookmark list

Having done this, the Bookmark window will now appear. This gives you a visual representation of your currently saved bookmarks, and lets you see exactly which sites have been saved and which haven't.

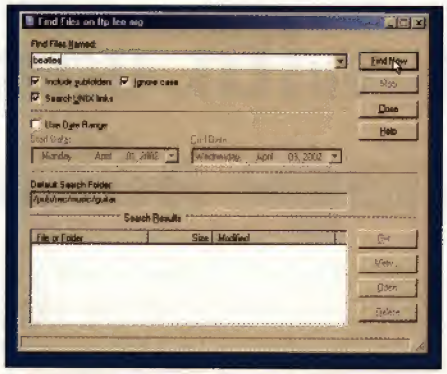


8 Downloading...

To download a file from the list that appears, you can either double-click on the file in question, or right-click and choose 'Download Selected' from the drop down menu.

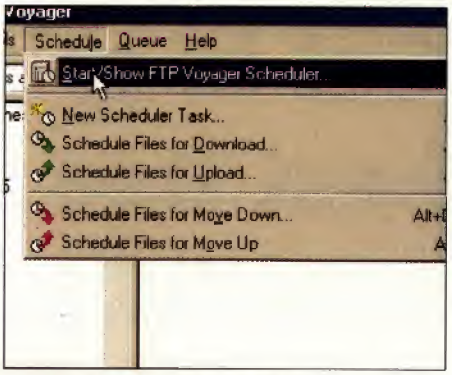
15 Find files

Likewise, if you're browsing a site with a large number of files, the prospect of searching for that one download you're looking for is not an enticing one. The Find feature makes it easier – go to 'Tools', then choose 'Find files'.



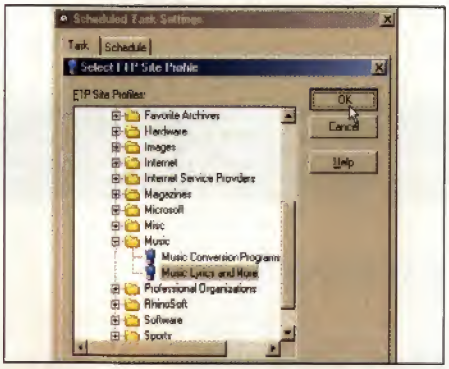
16 Searching

All you need to do now is enter your search word in the text box as shown above. You'll see a list of the results in the bottom window of this dialog box, each of which is downloadable with a swift double-click.



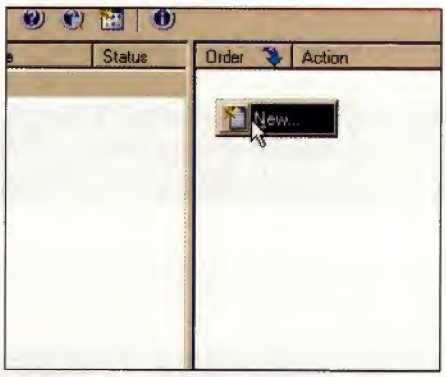
17 Setting schedules

If you visit a site that features regular updates, you might want to make use of the scheduling function. This enables you to set FTP Voyager to download files at set intervals. Go to 'Schedule', then choose 'Start' from the menu.



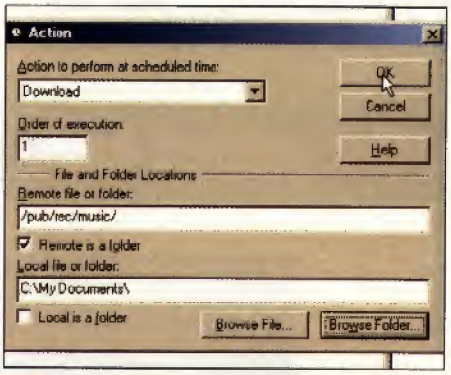
18 A new schedule

Click the 'New' symbol in the main toolbar of the Scheduler. This brings up the above dialog box, where you can perform a number of tasks. Most importantly, this is where you can select an FTP site to work in, so choose a site from the list.



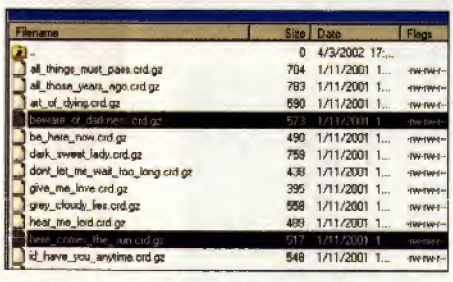
19 Advanced scheduling

As of yet, all we've told FTP Voyager is that we want to schedule something to happen on the FTP site at a certain time – but we haven't specified just what. To put this straight, right-click in the right-hand window and choose 'New'.



20 Set the schedule

This dialog box gives you the ability to configure your schedule item fully. First of all, select which task to perform – we've gone for 'Download'. Then, you need only set a local folder to save to, and you're away.



9 Multiple downloads

It can be a pain having to download each and every file individually. Thankfully, you can put an end to this boring practice by selecting multiple files simultaneously – by merely holding down 'CTRL' while selecting each file.

10 Download all of them

Having selected a variety of files, all you need to do to transfer them to your PC is to press on the 'Download selected' button in the main toolbar. It's not terribly easy to spot, so take a look at the picture above.

11 More info

Sometimes it can be helpful to get more information on the site you're visiting, especially as there are no Web graphics or menus to keep tabs on what's happening. To do this, click on the icon as shown above, to get more information.

In brief:
Task: Prepare your images for use on the Web
Software I need: IrfanView 3.61 is on the CD
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: Depends on how many pictures you have

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Get to grips with one of the best free image editors around

BUILDING A WEB SITE OR HONING YOUR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS? LET OUR GUIDE TO IRFANVIEW EXPLAIN HOW TO DISPLAY YOUR PICTURES WITH PRIDE

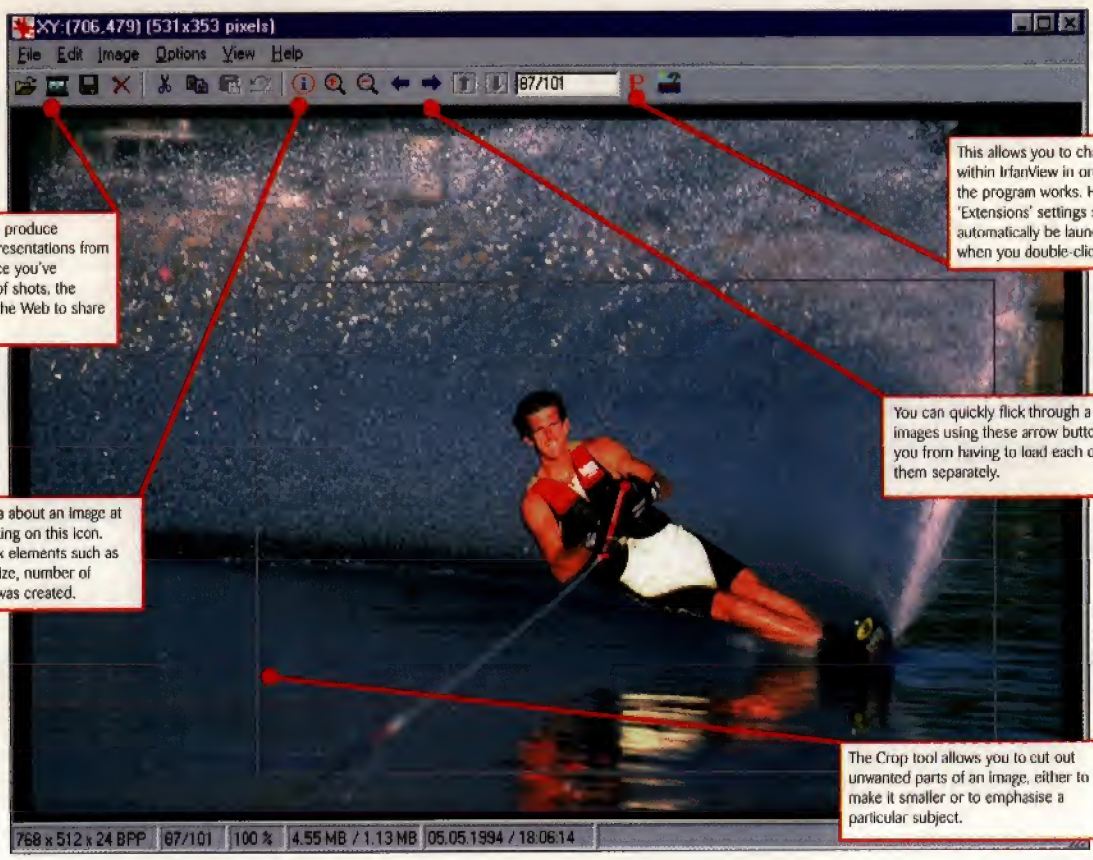
GETTING A DECENT piece of kit to edit photos with normally involves shelling out for a boxed product such as Paint Shop Pro or Photoshop Elements. However, there is a rare crop of excellent free image editors available. Of these, IrfanView is arguably the pick of the bunch and we've bundled it onto this month's cover disc for you to see for yourself.

As well as allowing you to view virtually any file format under the sun, including Photoshop files, the program lets you make all sorts of modifications to your images. You can effortlessly make changes such as cropping, blurring, sharpening and adjusting the colour depth of your pictures. What's more, IrfanView supports batch conversion and batch renaming of images, so you can make changes to many different pictures at the same time. This is ideal if you have a number of digital photos that you want to use on the Web as it saves you from having to muck about with the settings of each image individually. The program's Extension dialog even contains an option allowing you to designate a different icon for each different file format.

Another great feature of IrfanView is its Slideshow function, which lets you quickly knock together your own photographic presentation. This can then be uploaded to the Web if you wish to share it with your buddies.

The guided tour

Here's a look at some of the most impressive features of IrfanView



The program allows you to produce custom-made slideshow presentations from your favourite images. Once you've completed your montage of shots, the show can be uploaded to the Web to share with friends.

This allows you to change various settings within IrfanView in order to improve the way the program works. Here you can tweak the 'Extensions' settings so that an image will automatically be launched with IrfanView when you double-click on it.

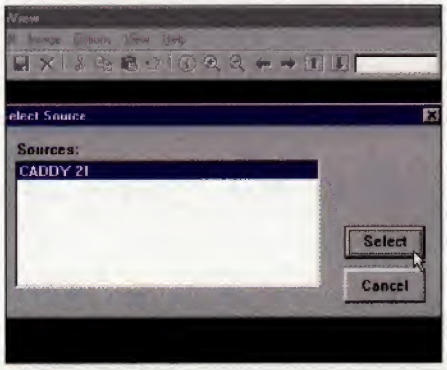
You can quickly flick through a range of images using these arrow buttons, saving you from having to load each one of them separately.

You can view useful data about an image at any time simply by clicking on this icon. This allows you to check elements such as its file name, location, size, number of colours and the date it was created.

The Crop tool allows you to cut out unwanted parts of an image, either to make it smaller or to emphasise a particular subject.

1 Open a file

To open an image from your hard drive, click 'Open' from the 'File' menu and browse to its location. To display images as thumbnails, choose 'Thumbnails' from the 'File' menu. Open an image in the main window by double-clicking its thumbnail.

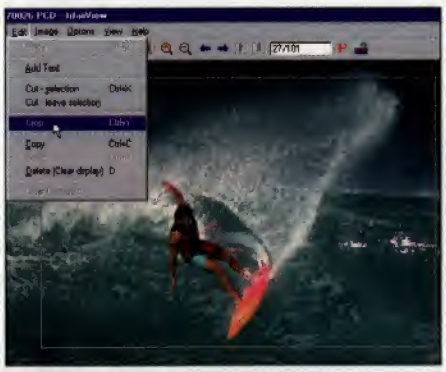


2 Select a source

IrfanView makes it simple to take shots from your digital camera for editing inside the program. From the 'File' menu, choose 'Select TWAIN source' to list the available camera drivers on your machine. Hit 'Select' to access the camera.

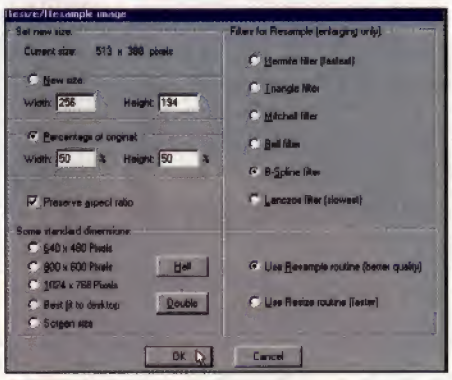
3 Acquire the pictures

Choose 'Acquire' from the 'File' menu. If your camera is connected, the images will be displayed as thumbnails. Double-click an image to open it in the viewer or click 'Select All' to open them all. Capture shots by clicking 'Take picture'.



4 Crop images

If you wish to remove unwanted areas from a picture, use the Crop tool. Simply click and drag a rectangle around the part of the image you wish to keep. Now choose 'Crop' from the Edit menu to cut the surrounding background.



5 Resize a picture

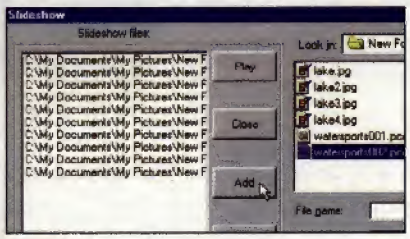
To prevent slow-loading pages when you upload the picture to the Web, you'll probably need to reduce its physical size. Choose the 'Resize/Resample' option from the 'Image' menu. Now enter the new dimensions for the picture.

6 Correct your image

To give your image a polished look, tweak the colour settings by choosing 'Enhance Colours' from the 'Image' menu. Use the scrollbars to change the brightness, contrast and colour balance. Click 'OK' once you're finished.

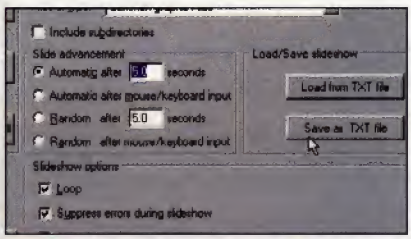
Create a slideshow

ONE OF THE most eye-catching things you can do to your images using IrfanView is to produce your very own slideshow. While this may bring back painful memories of old-fashioned slide presentations where you're forced to watch endless clips of French cheese museums or caravanning holidays, the IrfanView version actually makes for a snappy, lively presentation. Best of all, you can upload this to the Web to share with anyone you like.



1 Pick your pics

Select 'Slideshow' from the 'File' menu. Browse to the location of the images you want to use by clicking on the drop-down 'Look in' menu. Now highlight each picture you want and click 'Add' or simply drag it into the 'Slideshow Files' window.



2 Slideshow options

The bottom section of the Slideshow window allows you to tweak the settings of the presentation. Set the length of time between each slide being displayed and decide whether you want the show to loop or just stop when it reaches the last image.

3 On with the show...

To launch your finished slideshow click on the 'Play' button. Each image will now be displayed in turn in the main IrfanView window. Once you're happy with the presentation you can save it as a TXT file and upload it to the Web using an FTP program.

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• Email Aliases	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Web Forwarding	✓	×	×	×
• Unlimited FTP	×	✓	✓	✓
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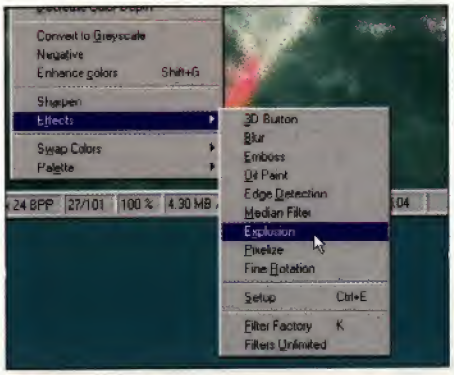
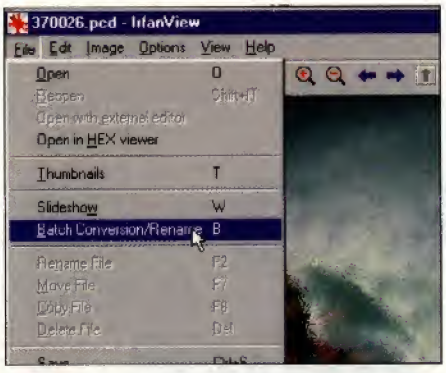


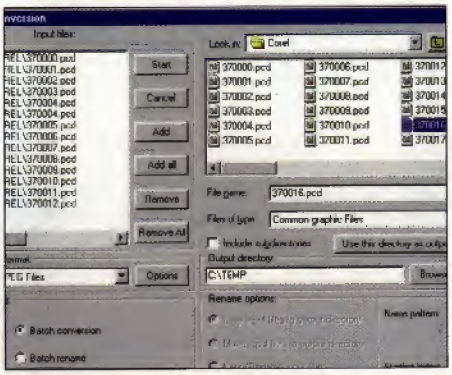
7 Special effects

In addition to changing colour settings, you can also access a variety of different special effects from the 'Image' menu. These can be used to liven up a dull image. By selecting the 'Sharpen' option you can also give added clarity to the picture.



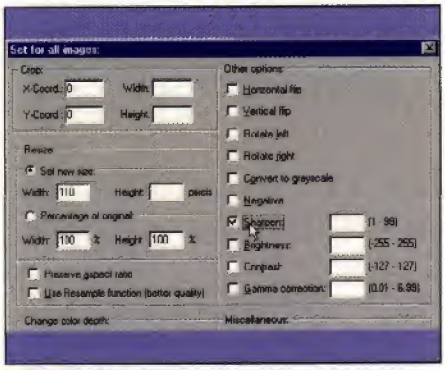
8 Batch conversion

Another great feature is Batch Conversion, which allows you to apply a particular change to a selection of images simultaneously. To enter Batch Conversion mode, click on the 'File' menu and choose 'Batch Conversion/Rename'.



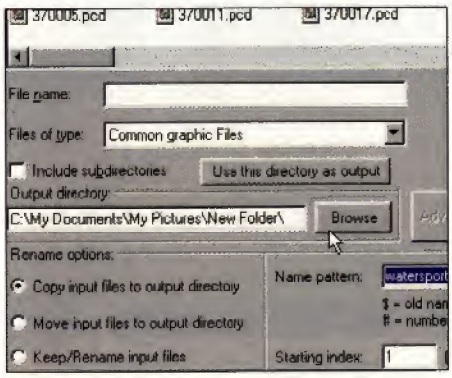
9 Select your images

Use the drop-down menu at the top-right of the window to locate the files to convert. Then highlight a file name from the list in the right-hand pane and click 'Add' to move the file to the 'Input files' window. Now click 'Advanced Options'.



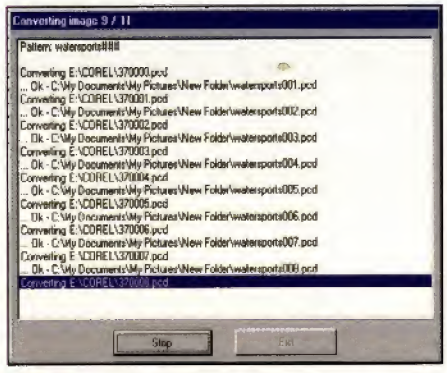
10 Compress the selection

You can set the changes to make to all the images. We've chosen to compress the images by reducing their width to 110 pixels for use as thumbnails. You can also apply the various effects to all the images. Click 'OK' to apply the changes.



11 Rename multiple files

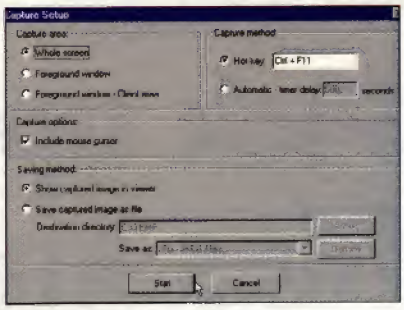
IrfanView lets you quickly change the names of all the files you've selected. Highlight the 'Batch Rename' button and choose an output directory to save the renamed images to using the 'Browse' button. Enter the name that you want.



12 Convert the batch

Finally, hit the 'Start' button in the Batch Conversion window to begin processing the changes. The optimised images will be saved along with their new file names to the location you specified in the previous step.

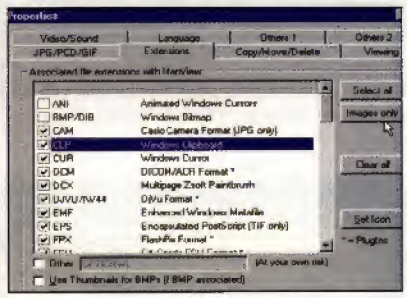
Tip!



Capture the moment

IrfanView boasts a 'Capture' mode, which allows you to take a snapshot of your PC screen. This is ideal for recording interesting sites, pictures or graphics you find on the Web. To activate the screen capture, choose 'Capture' from the 'Options' menu. Now specify whether you want to grab the whole screen or just the client window on top. Enter a capture method (the default is Ctrl-F11) and click on 'Start'. Now press the hotkey you specified to take a snap of the screen. The image will be loaded into the viewer where you can then crop it and tweak the settings if necessary.

Tip!



Handling file extensions

Once you feel comfortable using IrfanView you may want to set the program up to be your default viewer for all the various images you have on your machine. Choose 'Properties' from the 'Options' menu, or click on the 'P' icon in the main interface. Now click on the 'Extensions' tab and tick the image formats that you would like to be associated with IrfanView. To speed up this process, you can use the 'Select all' or 'Images only' buttons.

In brief:
Task: Set up and run Hotline
Software I need: Hotline Client
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: About half an hour

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Pick up MP3 files and more with Hotline

DON'T BOW TO PEER2PEER PRESSURE. LET HOTLINE LEAD THE WAY WITH ITS BOUNTIFUL SERVERS

WAY BACK, WHEN Napster was still in nappies, Hotline was the only commercially available file-sharing client on the planet. Unless you wanted to spend ages fiddling around with FTP sites, Hotline was pretty much the only option open to punters keen to pick up the latest MP3s and the like.

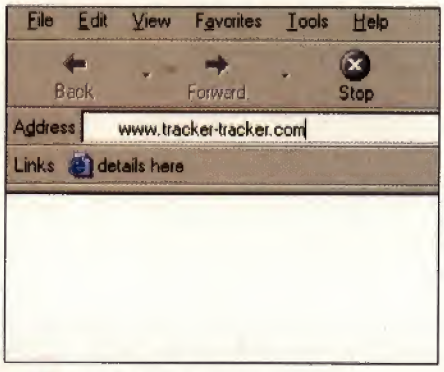
Times quickly change, though, and Hotline is now but one of a phalanx of file sharers on the go. But while KaZaA and Morpheus have taken the plaudits recently with their wealth of users and vast numbers of files to share, Hotline still deserves a place in your start-up menu. For a start, Hotline doesn't thrive on peer2peer pressure for its sharing options. Instead, you connect to servers through the Hotline network – although you view the files held within using the Hotline interface, you're actually connecting to remote servers.

In many ways, Hotline is much more like traditional FTP than the peer2peer madness we've seen so much of. Just make sure that the server you connect to is reputable, and isn't going to try and sting you for money.

1 Choose a username
After you've installed the Hotline Client from this month's cover CD, start the program up. Before you can start connecting, you'll have to enter a username. This is just the name that other users will know you by on the network.

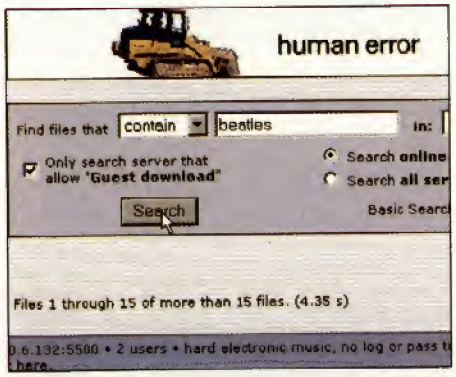
2 Pick an icon
You'll now be prompted to choose an icon to accompany your name whenever you join up to a server. Again, this is merely to identify you to other punters – there are loads of symbols to choose from, though.

3 Hotline main screen
Now you've created an online 'persona', you can start using Hotline. You'll see that the interface is split into separate windows, allowing you to tinker with the settings you need. The 'Hotline Connect' window is the most important.



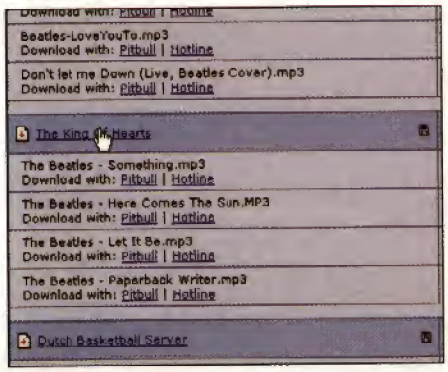
4 Tracker action
At the moment, we're not connected to anything, so let's get some trackers into Hotline to find out where the hottest servers are. Open your browser, and navigate to '**www.tracker-tracker.com**'. Once there, click the 'Hotline' button.

5 Searching...
There are a few ways of getting the tracker information you need to make Hotline work for you. The easiest is to perform a search for a type of file on all the servers currently online. Click on the 'File Search' button.



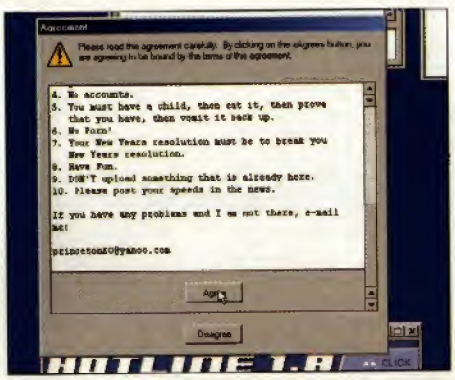
6 Search parameters

First up, and this is the most vital thing of all, make sure you tick the 'Guest download' box, so that you can get files for nowt. Then you can alter the file type according to what you wish to download, and enter your word to search for.



7 Results!

After a brief moment, you'll be presented with a list of results, showing you what appear on which servers. Although you only see 15 results, there will no doubt be many more, so feel free to keep looking. Click on a server name to visit it.

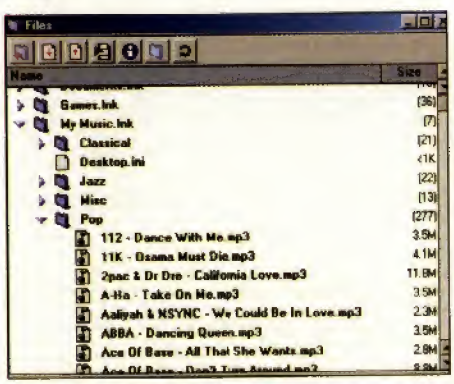


8 Sign the agreement

Once you click the link, you'll be taken back into Hotline, where the server will be imported. After you're connected to it, the agreement will appear (click the 'Newspaper' icon if it doesn't). Read through, then click the 'Agree' button.

9 Get at the files

Now that we've done all the preliminaries, let's finally get down to some serious file-sharing. To get at the files on the server we've just connected to, click on the 'Files' button in the 'Hotline Connect' window.



10 The file list

This will bring up the 'Files' window, which shows you the, erm, files currently stored on the server. Browsing through these files is similar to looking through any folder you'd find on a computer, with a slightly Mac-inspired interface.

11 Downloading...

Once you find a file that takes your fancy, you have a couple of options to get it across to your PC. You can either double-click on the item in question, or simply select it and then click on the 'Download' button in the main toolbar.

Jargon buster

Server

A remotely-stored folder which contains accessible files. Hotline servers allow you to drag and drop files, just as you would with the servers in your office.

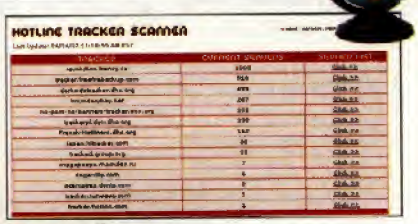
Tracker

A tracker is basically a list of servers. Because many of the servers in Hotline contain less than police-friendly files, tracking companies have to scour for new servers. This is why there is such competition between trackers.

Guest access

Unfortunately, many of the server owners in Hotline have cottoned on to the money-making opportunities of sharing their files; some are still altruistic enough to give them to you for nowt. If this is the case, you're looking for 'guest access'

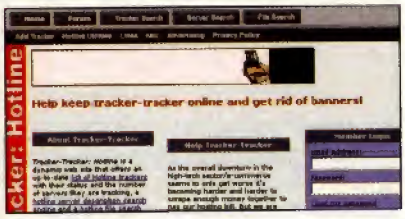
Web resources



TrackerFrog

www.trackerfrog.com

While it's a lot more basic than other Tracker sites, TrackerFrog claims to be as up-to-date with its listings as is humanly possible. In a way this is actually better for Hotline trawlers, as you can simply pop in and pick up the info you need far quicker. Bizarre name, though.



Tracker-Tracker

www.tracker-tracker.com

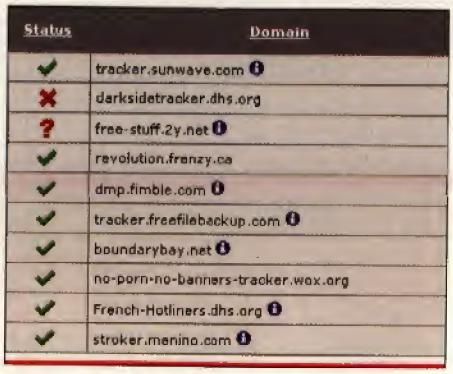
Okay, so we used this site in the project itself, but it's worth taking another look at it just so we can drill into you how good it is. As well as the essential tracker lists, you can also perform a variety of searches, and there's even a forum.

12 The download

After starting the download, the Tasks window should appear. This shows you the progress of any current tasks (at the moment, only one), and works in a similar format to the download box that appears in Internet Explorer.

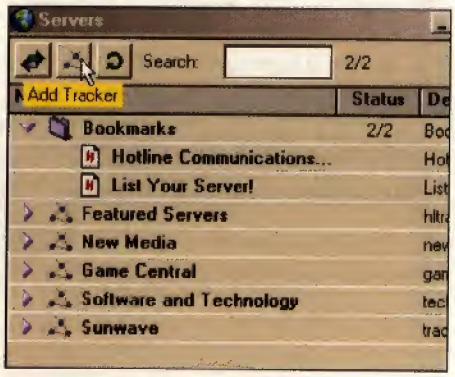
13 A different route

If you don't want to search for particular files and just want to join servers based on what they might offer overall, connect in the following way. Go back to the **www.tracker-tracker.com** site, then click on the 'List of Hotline trackers' link.



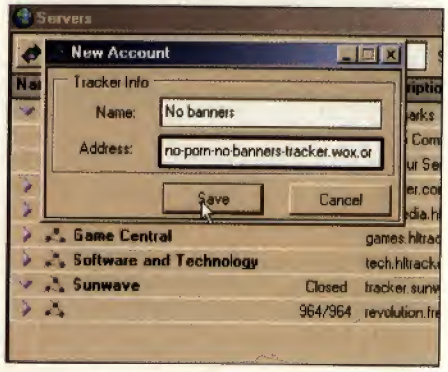
14 Tracker list

This takes you to the tracker list, as shown above. For some reason, you can't connect from this page as you could do before, so you'll have to go the long way. Select the tracker name, then copy it to the clipboard by pressing 'CTRL' + 'C'.



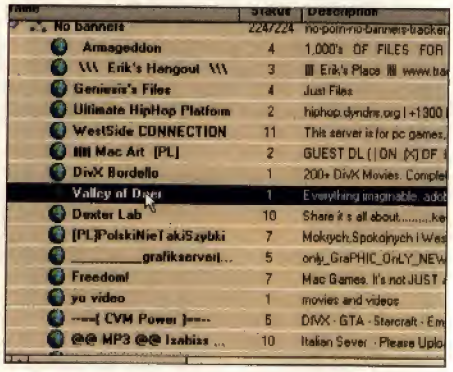
15 Add the tracker

Go back into Hotline, then click on the 'Servers' button in the Hotline Connect window. This opens the Servers window, as shown above. Click on the 'Add tracker' icon at the top of the box to import our newly-found tracker into Hotline.



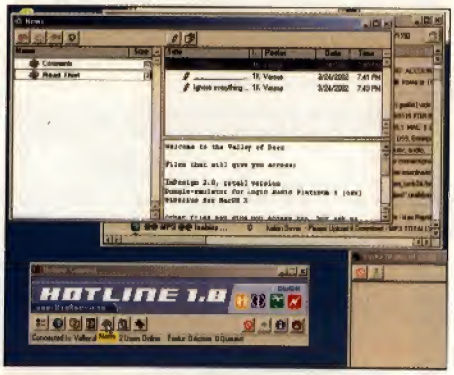
16 Tracker info

In the 'New account' pop-up box, enter a name for the tracker (this is entirely up to you), then paste the tracker address into the bottom text box by pressing 'CTRL' + 'V'. Having done this, click on the 'Save' button to connect to it.



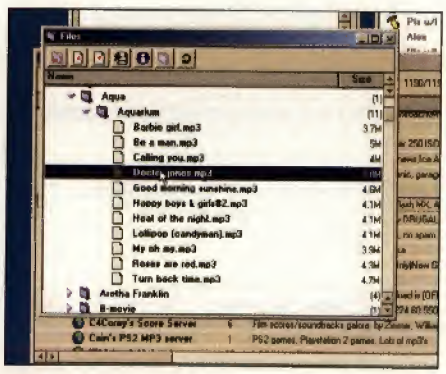
17 Server list

You'll see the tracker in your list. Open it up to see the servers contained within. Our tracker has 224 servers in it, all of which are jam-packed with folders full of files. Not all of them are free, so we need to find which ones are before we connect.



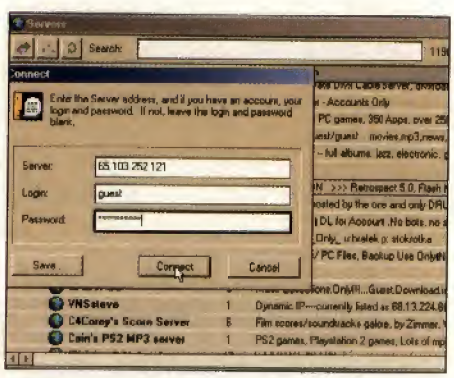
18 Here is the news

After finding a server that you like the look of, double-click on it to connect. Before you even start to look at the files, check the 'News' to make sure the owner of the server doesn't want you to pay good money to access them.



19 Guest access

If you're lucky, you'll be allowed to connect to the server in question as a guest. This means you can simply go in, browse through the folders, and download as you wish. You're encouraged to upload as well, but it's not a necessity.



20 Signing up

If you can't get guest access, you'll have to follow the guidelines to getting a login name and password. Once you've done this, click on the 'Connect to server' button at the top-left of the 'Servers' window, then enter your information.

In brief:
Task: Create your own NeoPlanet skin
Software I need: NeoPlanet, PaintShop Pro or other graphics software
Difficulty: Advanced
Time I need: Probably a few hours

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

NeoPlanet.

Build your own NeoPlanet skin

INDULGE YOUR ARTISTIC TENDENCIES BY CHANGING THE WAY YOUR BROWSER LOOKS

YOU WOULDN'T MOVE into a new house and leave all the old furniture and design intact, would you? Likewise, very few PC users are content to let their computer remain the way they bought it – from screen savers to wallpapers, to Windows tweakers; even novices feel no qualms about altering the look of their Operating System.

For some reason, however, browsers totally escape most people's attention. Considering it's the one program you're guaranteed to use more than any other, we think it's sheer folly to blindly let Microsoft dictate to you that your browser should look the way they want it to.

One way around this is to migrate to another browser, and we'd certainly recommend trying Opera, but most people are reluctant to leave IE. The solution is NeoPlanet – although branded as a browser in its own right, it fits over the top of IE to give you more features and options than ever before. And when you've got a problem, the inner workings are exactly the same as using Microsoft's flagship.

More than this, though, NeoPlanet is known for being the most skinnable browser around. There are literally thousands of pre-made skins available to completely alter look of the program, and regular readers will know of our devotion to art of skinning – let's face it, anything in the cosmos that transforms your browser from boring battleship grey into a visual fest can't really be bad, can it?

Original skin

Sometimes in life, you have to take control of situations. Now is the time for you to impress yourself with your innate ability to create your very own skin. No longer will you have to slowly wade through the skins lists hunting for one that fits the bill – for you'll be able to make exactly what you want yourself.

Before you go wading in, though, it's worth noting that this isn't the easiest task you'll ever undertake on your PC. In fact, it's a terrifying prospect to the uninitiated, with a full skin requiring you to create hundreds of graphics and icons. A bit of nous, however, tells you that you can simply edit the 'default' skin given to you with NeoPlanet. Used as a basis for your future work, this skin lets you see the exact dimensions and format of every graphic that has to be generated. So, go on – treat yourself to a nice new browser, that's been built up lovingly by your good self.

1 Second skin

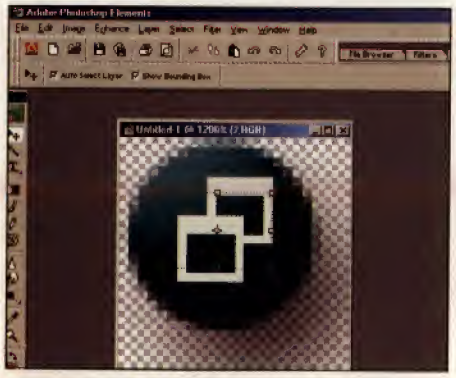
First of all, create a folder for your skin, then import the files from the 'default' skin into it. Go to 'Program Files\NeoPlanet\data\media', then create a folder called 'my new skin'. Copy the files from the 'default' folder into this folder.

2 Open the first file

Open the 'toolbar.bmp' file from the new folder. Notice the graphic is made up of tiny icons. This is how you build up toolbars and graphics for your browser – each icon is automatically picked up and placed in the browser window as necessary.

3 The toolbar icons

Zoom in on the first couple of icons to see them better. Each icon takes up 24x24 pixels – the graphics are placed perfectly adjacent to each other. In effect, each 24x24 pixel square is classed as a completely different graphic by NeoPlanet.



4 Create buttons

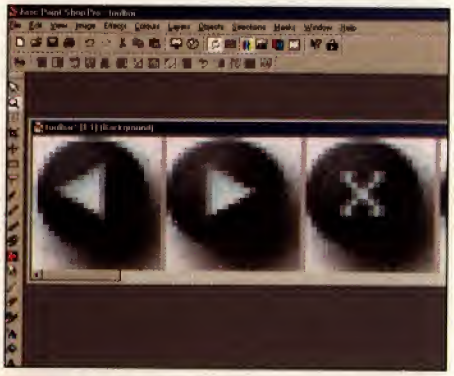
To make replacement buttons for those already in the 'toolbar.bmp', create a new image with dimensions of 24x24 in Photoshop Elements and place a circle within it. We added a layer style and placed 'Wingding' text to give us symbols.

5 Importing...

When your buttons are created, import them into the 'toolbar.bmp'. Making sure the original file is still open, open up the first button in your graphics program. Select all of it (it should be 24x24 pixels), then go to 'Edit', then 'Copy'.

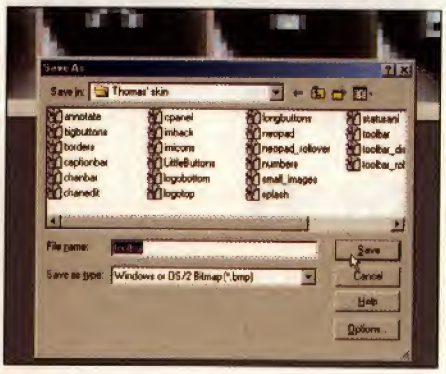
6 More importing

Using the Selection tool, draw a 24x24 pixel box from the top left-hand corner of the 'toolbar.bmp' image. Go to the 'Edit' menu in Paint Shop Pro and select 'Paste' then 'Into Selection'. Your new button will replace the old one.



7 More buttons

Follow the same principles to build up the rest of your buttons. Each time, make sure you have selected a 24x24 box, and also that the start point is always an increment of 24. Pretty soon, you should have a toolbar to call your own.



8 Save it

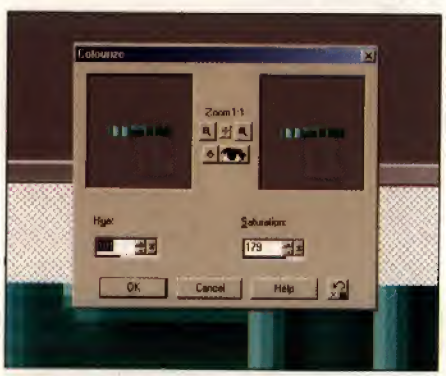
After building up the toolbar, you should save it over the original in your 'My new skin' folder. Before you do this, you have to make sure that the file is in 'Indexed colour' mode, and not 'RGB' mode.

9 Altered states

You now have to create 'disabled' and 'rollover' states for your buttons. Use exactly the same principles as before to achieve results. The files to base your icons on are called 'toolbar_disabled' and 'toolbar_rollover'.

10 Bring in the borders

Open up 'borders.bmp', and you'll see the above graphic. This is actually seven 10x10 images, each of which relates to a border graphic within the browser. If you move along ten pixels at a time, you'll see better what each picture does.



11 Build a border

We suggest that you take the easy route here. You can subtly alter the border by simply changing the colour balance within, meaning that you get the same style, but with enough difference to be distinct.

12 Big buttons

Every time a dialog box appears in NeoPlanet, you'll see a mix of three icons. These are known as 'bigbuttons.bmp' in the skins folder. Open this up, and we can generate that authentic big buttons feel on our own.

13 Personal buttons

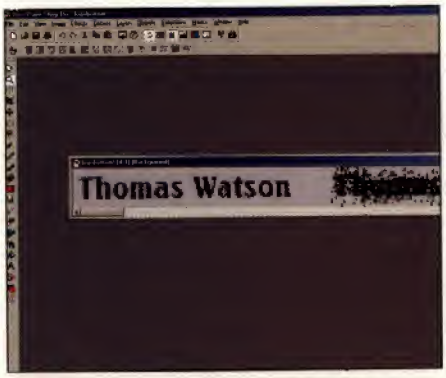
Using the same method as before, create your own three 'big buttons', each of which must be exactly 24x24 pixels. Although they're known as 'bigbuttons', these aren't actually any bigger than the others. Paste each of them in as before.

14 Save again

With your three 'big buttons' now slotted over the original versions, save them out. As before, make sure that you convert your image to Indexed colour mode. Once you've done this, save this 'bigbutton.bmp' image over the original.

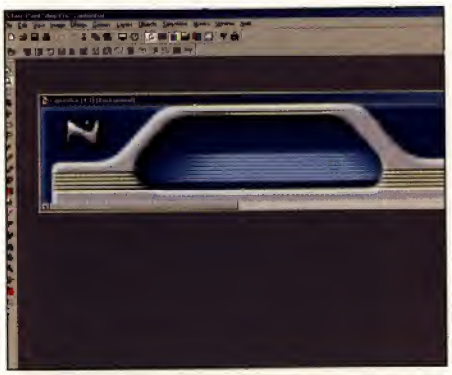
15 A top logo

The 'logotop.bmp' file is made up of 124 images of 130x48 pixels. These make an animated logo which sits at the top of your browser. You don't have to use the whole 124 frames, but the more you use, the smoother the animation will be.



16 Bottom logo

The 'logobottom.bmp' file makes up an animated logo. Using the same number of maximum frames, this file is comprised of 130x20 pixel pictures. The first frame is the default picture that's used when no animating is needed.



17 Caption bar

The 'captionbar.bmp' file contains vital images that go to define the toolbar and the way that windows are displayed. Each of the three images is further split into separate sections to further define your look.

18 The skin in action

After your hard work, take a look at your skin in action. Open up NeoPlanet, and choose your skin from the list. We've only started you on the skin creation path, though, so keep working to change every aspect of your browser.

Web resources

NeoPlanet

www.neoplanet.com

Despite recent changes to the site that makes it much more difficult to pick up relevant information, the NeoPlanet site should still be your first stop for browser information. Before you go straight into designing your own skin, it's worth checking out some of the ready-made ones from the list on this site.

NeoPlanet skin creation

www.neoplanet.com/user_central/skins/create/index.html

Although we've gone into a fair amount of depth, we've only really scratched the surface of creating your own skin. The above link takes you directly to NeoPlanet's richly informative advice, telling you about the files you should be changing, and explaining what each one is there for. There's also a **.psd** template that will make creating your own skin that little bit easier.

Tip!

IF YOU DON'T have the time or inclination to spend ages generating three separate toolbars for the same buttons (as we discussed in step 9), there's an easier way. Don't just leave the files the way they are, as this will bring up the default 'disabled' and 'rollover' buttons, which will contrast with the look you've created. Instead, create two identical copies of the 'toolbar.bmp' icon by going into the folder, holding down 'CTRL', and dragging the file in question. Rename these two copies as 'toolbar_disabled.bmp' and 'toolbar_rollover', making sure you remove the originals of these first. Your buttons will now look the same no matter what's going on. Granted, it doesn't look half as impressive, but it sure saves a hell of a lot of work.

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In brief:
Task: Build a business Web site
Software I need: AceHTML 4 on the cover disc
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 1 hour

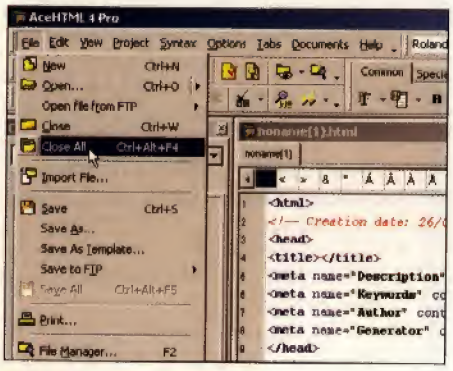
Practical Internet IT'S ON THE CD

Build a Web site for your business with AceHTML 4 Pro

USING ACEHTML 4 PRO ON THE COVER DISC YOU CAN BUILD A GREAT WEB SITE IN AROUND AN HOUR THANKS TO ITS BUILT-IN TEMPLATES

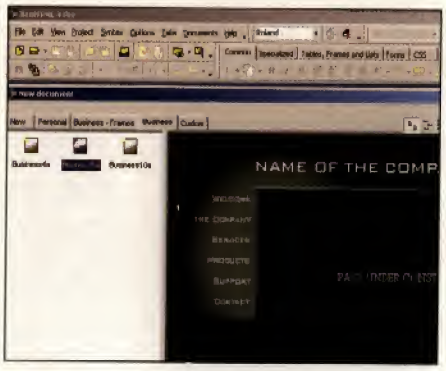
WHEN YOU ARE looking for a product or a service, where do you search? The Yellow Pages? Possibly, but another source of invaluable information is the Internet. People are increasingly using the Net as a way of pinning down what they want, which means that if you run a business, it is essential you have your own Web site. You can opt to sell your goods over the Net, but even this isn't essential. Sometimes people just want information such as an address, telephone or email address where they can request further details.

With AceHTML Pro 4 you can easily build a simple Web site for your business in around an hour, and we're going to show you how to get started. The program offers a choice of several different templates, which are perfect for getting your site underway. You will need to know a little HTML, but you certainly don't need to be an expert. AceHTML presents all the parameters that tags require in a simple point and click list. It even provides access to an online image library and automatically inserts graphics into your pages.



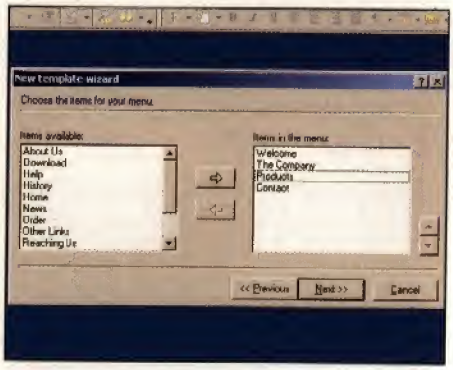
1 Start AceHTML

When you run AceHTML 4 Pro after installing it from the cover disc, you'll see a Web page skeleton. We don't need this blank page, so go to the 'File' menu and select 'Close All'. Return to 'File' and select 'New'.



2 Choose a template

The tabs provide access to a range of template categories. For our site, we will use a template on the Business tab. Click 'Business', then click 'Business6a' to see a preview in the window on the right. Click 'OK'.

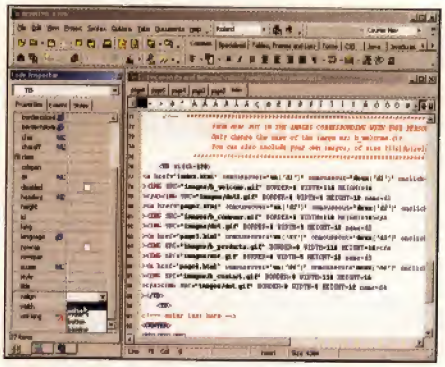


3 Select the pages

The New Template Wizard displays a list of pages available in this template on the left and the currently selected ones on the right. Select a page and click the left and right arrows to add or remove it as required.

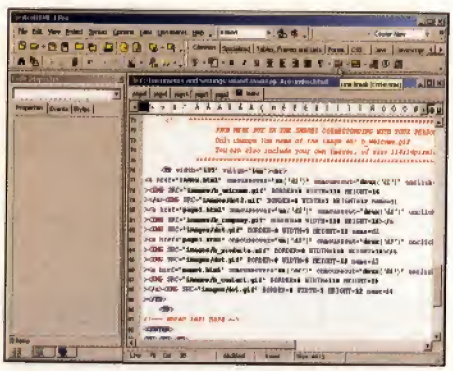
4 Save the template

You will now be asked to choose a folder to save the template files. Click the button to display this folder browser and find a suitable location. You can create a new folder by clicking the icon in the top corner.



5 Edit HTML tags

You rarely have to edit an HTML tag. Instead, place the cursor in a tag and use the Code Inspector on the left to change the properties. Here we are setting the vertical alignment of the contents of a table cell.



6 Insert HTML tags

New HTML tags are entered by locating them on the tabbed toolbars and clicking the icons. Click at the end of the first line of HTML after the red comment (after the TD tag) and click the 'Line Break' button.

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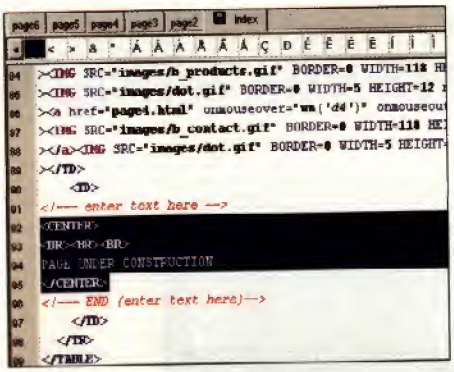
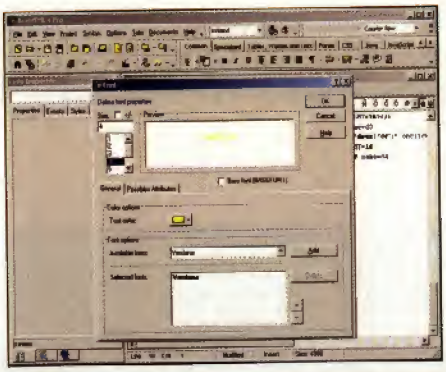


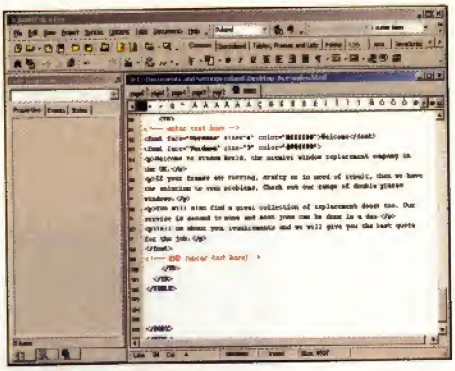
7 Add your own text

Scroll down the page and you will see a section enclosed by red comments labelled Enter text here. This is where you enter your own text and images. Delete all the text and HTML between the two comments.



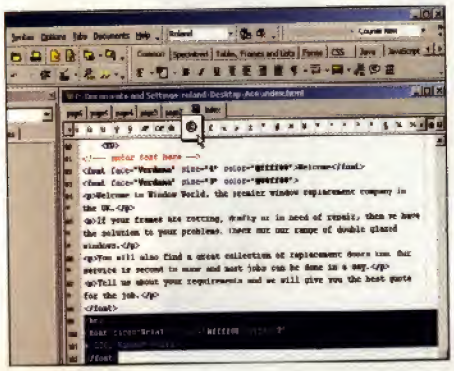
8 Define a font

Click the 'Font' button in the toolbar (Common tab) and the Font dialog is displayed. Pick a font from the drop-down list and click the 'Add' button to select it. Pick a size and click the colour chip to select a colour.



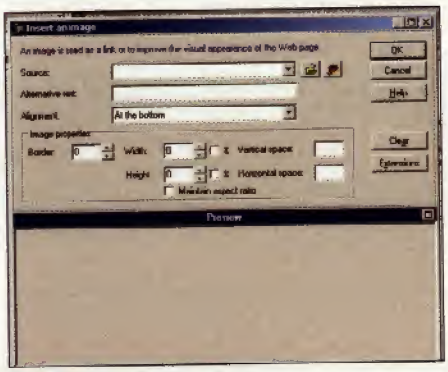
9 Tags and text

Click the 'OK' button and the opening and closing tags are entered for you and your cursor is in the middle. Enter the title for this page. Many tags work in a similar way and you can quickly add tags and text.



10 Add special characters

In the highlighted section we have added a copyright notice to our Web page. You can add special characters such as foreign letters and symbols by locating them in the bar at the top of the page and double-clicking.

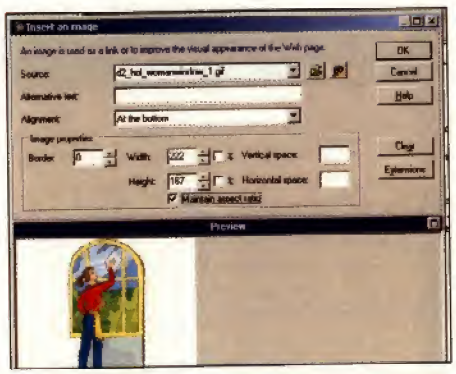


11 Add an image

Select the 'Specialized' toolbar tab and click the 'Insert Image' button (third from left). In the dialog that appears you can enter the filename of the image in the Source box or click the folder button to select a file.

12 Access free graphics

Make sure you are connected to the Internet and click the 'Go' button in the Insert Image dialog. The GOgraph Web site is displayed and you can search for an image. Select one by clicking the 'Click Here' link.



13 Insert an image

After selecting an image, click the 'Insert and Close' button. When asked for a folder to save it to, choose the one containing your Web site project. When you return here you can set the image properties.

14 Tweak the graphics

After inserting all the graphics you can load them into your favourite photo editor to tweak them, for instance, giving the gifs transparent backgrounds. Replace **header.gif** in the images folder of the project with your company logo.

15 Preview the page

You may be wondering what the page looks like, so let's take a peek. Press the 'F10' key and two tabs appear at the bottom of the code window – Editor and Viewer. Click the 'Viewer' tab to see the Web page.

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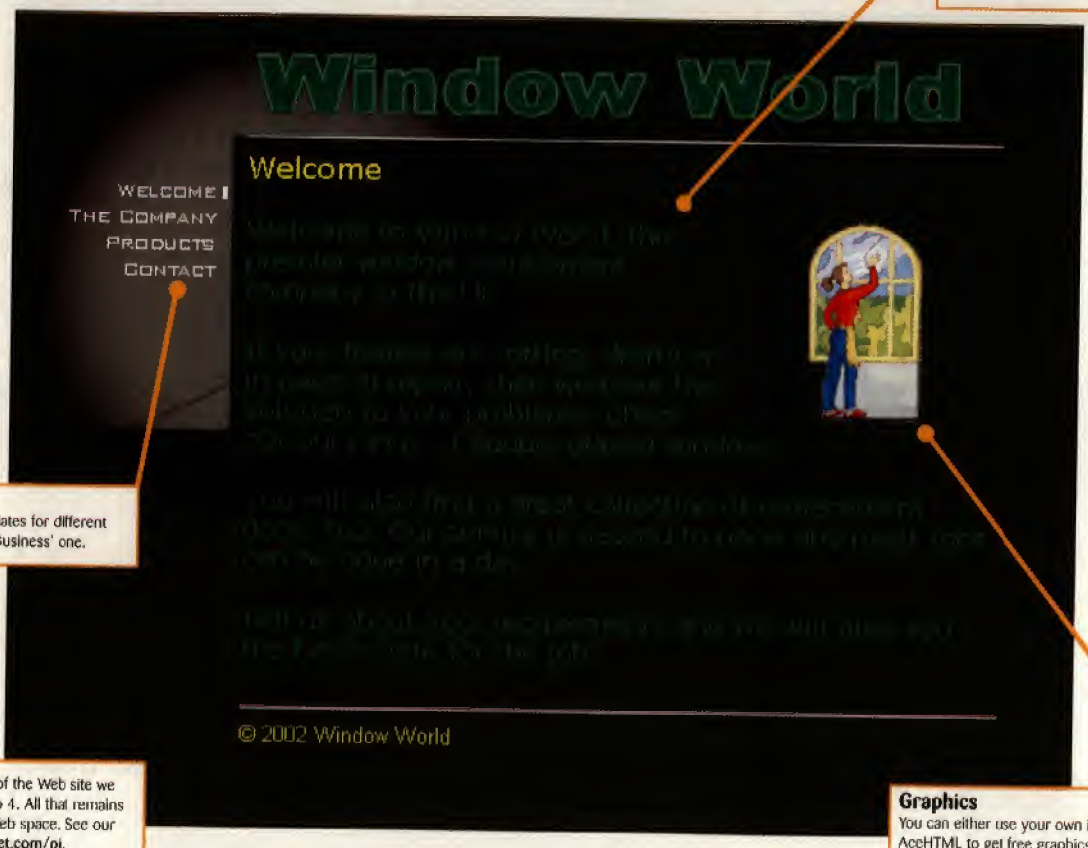
The guided tour

How we used AceHTML 4 Pro to create a business Web site

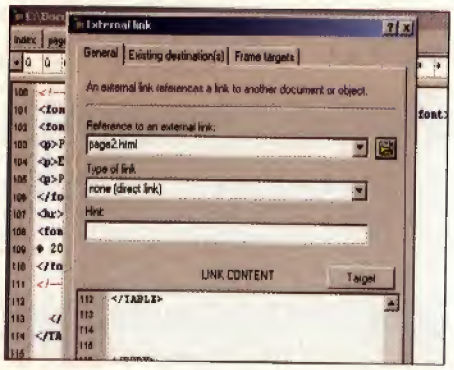


Body text
Adding text is easy – it's just a case of typing it in on the template.

Templates
There are different templates for different occasions, we chose a 'Business' one.

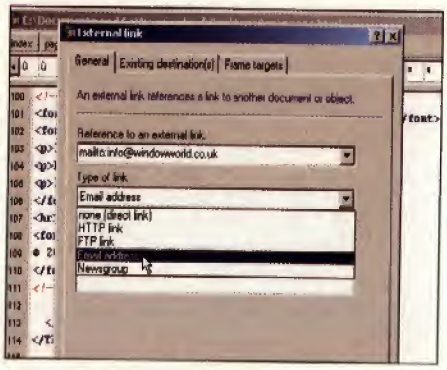
Here is the home page of the Web site we created in AceHTML Pro 4. All that remains is to upload it to your Web space. See our site at www.cracker.u-net.com/pi.

Graphics
You can either use your own image, or use AceHTML to get free graphics for your page.



16 Add a hyperlink

Hyperlinks are easily added to a Web page. Just position the cursor where you want the link and click the 'External Link' button in the Specialized toolbar tab. Click the folder button to choose a file in your project.



17 Add an email link

So that visitors can contact you, it is a good idea to have an email link. Click the 'External Link' button as before, but this time, select 'Email Address' from the drop-down list. Enter your email address into the box.

Tip!

WHEN CREATING WEB pages by entering raw HTML tags, there is always the chance that you will make an error. Fortunately, AceHTML helps by presenting tag parameters in a simple list, but even so, you should check the code afterwards. When a page is finished, go to the 'Syntax' menu and select 'Check Document'. The program will make sure there are no mistakes.

Another danger is in making the page so large it takes ages to download, which will irritate your visitors. Keep an eye on the size by going to the 'Syntax' menu and selecting 'Evaluate Document'. You will be told the weight (the size in k). Make sure this is below 100k to keep the site speedy. The Evaluate Document function checks the hyperlinks, too.

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In brief:
Task: Create a password for your site
Software I need: I need: CoffeeCup Password Wizard
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: 15 minutes

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Password protect your Web pages

PREVENT UNWELCOME VISITORS FROM ACCESSING YOUR SITE USING COFFEECUP PASSWORD WIZARD

THERE ARE TIMES when you don't want just anyone looking through your Web pages. You might have a member's only area, or you may want to restrict postings on a message board.

Luckily, it's fairly simple to set up a password protection facility for your site. CoffeeCup Password Wizard allows you to produce professional-looking applets using Java or Flash without having to program anything yourself.

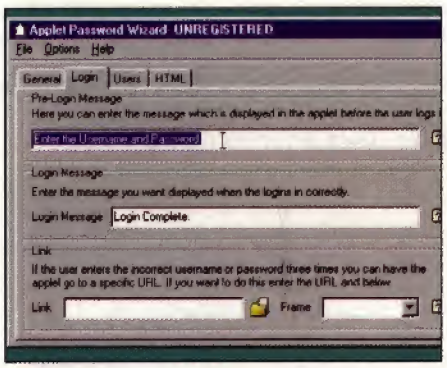
You can set up the applet to send users to another URL of your choice depending on whether they provide a matching username and password or not. Plus, you can customise the look of the applet by altering the background colour, message text and window size. Once you've filled in all the required fields you can copy and paste the code into your page's HTML to secure your sensitive information.

1 Choose applet type

Install and run the program from the cover CD. When prompted, choose whether you wish to use Flash or Java to create your password applet. Your visitors will need the plug-in you choose in order to use the password protection.

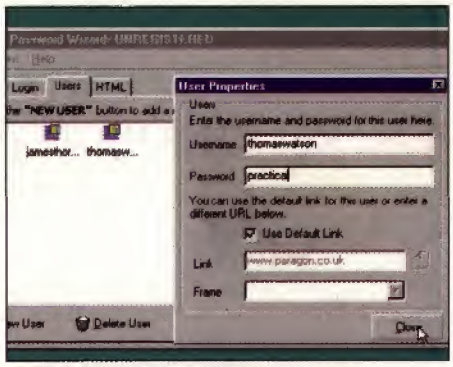
2 General settings

When launched, you will be taken to the 'General' settings window. Select the applet dimensions and the background and text colours using the palettes at the bottom of the window. Now enter the URL that the visitor will be taken to.



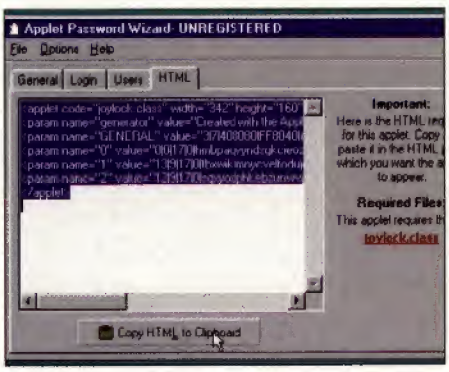
3 Customise the Login

Click the 'Login' tab to personalise the login applet. Type in the message that will prompt the user to enter their username and password, then enter the text that will be displayed when the login is successful.



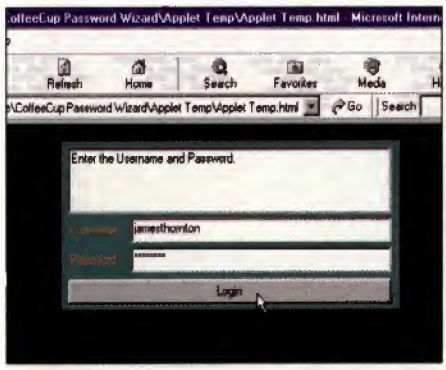
4 Enter users

Now set up your usernames and passwords. Click the 'Users' tab and hit 'New User' to add a person's own username and password manually or click 'Load Users' to import a list of names and passwords from a .txt file.



5 Copy the HTML

To apply the applet to your site, copy the HTML code that's been generated and paste it into the page where you want the password protection to appear. Click the 'HTML' tab and hit 'Copy HTML to Clipboard' before pasting it in.



6 Preview your applet

To check that the password applet looks okay, either click the 'Test in Browser' or 'Show Preview' buttons in the main interface. Change any of the text or colour schemes if you want, then re-copy the HTML and replace the previous pasting.

Tip!

Top of the class

IN ORDER TO make a Java applet work, you need to have a .class file. This file is the Java program and needs to be included on your Web site to get the applet to function. The .class file comes with the Applet Password Wizard already made and ready for use. It is called **joylock.class** and is in the folder where the Password Wizard is installed. Of course, just having the .class file on your site isn't enough, and you need to put HTML code in the page that will display the applet. This HTML code is what the Applet Password Wizard creates. It tells the .class file how to customise the applet – what colours and images to use and what size it is.

In brief:
Task: Design a stylish button bar
Software I need: Any Web browser
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: 30 minutes

Make a button bar without buying software

NO NEED TO DOWNLOAD AND INSTALL SOFTWARE TO CREATE A NAVIGATION BAR – IT'S FREE THROUGH YOUR WEB BROWSER

ALL WEB SITES live or die by their navigation systems. If visitors can't find their way around your site, they won't bother – it really is that simple. Visitors are also more likely to return to a site which they remember as being easy to get around. Thankfully, you don't have to be an artistic genius to get a good-looking site. There are various free services online that will automatically create graphics such as navigation bars in no time at all. All you then have to do is drop the graphics into your Web page design and put the whole thing online.

The graphic generating service that we'll be explaining in this tutorial is WebGFX's Nav-o-Mat, which can be found at **www.webgfx.ch**. You can also find similar offerings at **www.mediabuilder.com** and **www.cooltext.com**. You can find plenty of other Web resources at the WebGFX site, including individual animated buttons, logos and even tools that will create a site from scratch for you. All that's required to enjoy the full benefits of the site is a quick and easy free registration, which is explained in the tutorial here.

1 Fire up webGFX

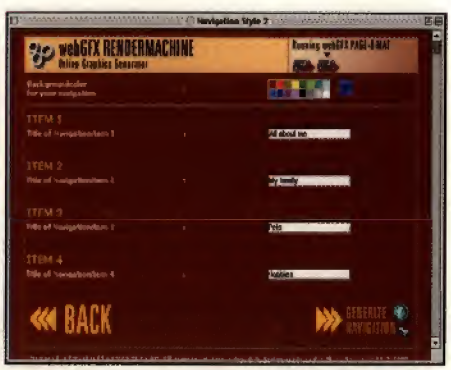
The webGFX services work through your Web browser, so anyone can use the service, regardless of what computer they have. You can get started by visiting **www.webgfx.ch** and clicking the 'Nav-o-Mat' link in the left-hand column.

2 Pick your design

The first option lets you choose your navigation bar. There is a good range and they can all be placed on top of the background colour of your choice. Select one by clicking it, making sure it has enough navigation items for your site.

3 Background colours

In this page, click the large colour swatch in the top-right corner to launch a colour picker. Select the background colour for the navigation bar by clicking the desired colour in the palette. Click 'Close Window' when you've selected a colour.



4 Enter button text labels

The colour just selected should be seen in the swatch in the top-right corner of the page. Use the boxes to type in the item headings for each of the navigation items, then click 'Generate Navigation' to create your custom button bar.

Tip!

TO UNZIP THE finished navigation system, make sure you have Winzip (from **www.winzip.com**) or Stuffit Expander (from **www.aladdinsys.com**) installed on your machine. These are fairly standard programs so you may well find one of them already installed on your machine – you can easily find this out by double-clicking on the downloaded file and seeing if that launches a program or just produces an error message. These tools are needed as the file you download from WebGFX is a compressed archive containing all the graphics and files you need. By providing the files in this way, a lot of time is saved on the download.

5 Register with webGFX

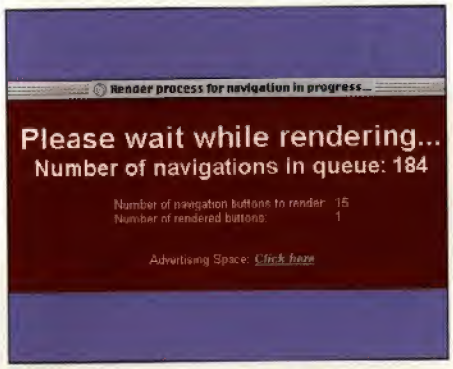
Unless you've already registered, you will see this screen. Don't worry – this is a completely free procedure, and your navigation design choices will be remembered automatically while you register. Click 'Sign Up' to get started.

6 Your details

Fill out the required information to register. Be sure to choose a memorable username and password. You shouldn't need to re-enter them, though, as long as you access webGFX from the same computer.

Tip!

PLACING THE NAVIGATION bar on every page of your Web site will create a good, consistent look, and makes it easy to jump between sections. Do this by duplicating the code for the navigation bar to every page or putting it in a separate frame, so that it is always visible. The best way of doing this is to create a template page including the graphics, and to create each page from your site using that template. If your site already exists you can simply copy and paste the content from the current pages into new documents based on the template.



7 Wait for rendering

With the registration complete, you'll see a message saying that the navigation system is being rendered. This could take anything from a few seconds to a number of minutes. You can browse other sites while you wait – just stay online.

8 Download or view?

The rendering progress screen will eventually change to the above page, with the option to view or download the navigation. It's best to download it, as this will speed things up and you can easily view the bar once it has been downloaded.

9 View the bar

The download will be a ZIP archive, so decompress it (see 'Tip'). This will create a folder called 'NAV'. Use the 'Open' option in the 'File' menu of your Web browser to load up the 'index.html' file in this folder.

10 Get the bar working

To integrate the design into an existing Web page, you'll need to open up both pages in a text editor. Select the area of code between <head> and </head>, copy it and then paste it after the <head> tag in the existing HTML file.

11 Finish the process

Now select everything from the start of the <body> tag to just before the </body> tag, and copy and paste this into the existing Web page. You should also replace your existing <body> tag with the one from the navigation page.

12 Test it out

Load up your page into a Web browser, and the navigation bar should be on the existing page. Move your mouse pointer over the bar and each item should glow. Note that you will have to alter the <a href> tags to point at the correct pages.

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In brief:
Task: Add personal and dynamic features to a Web page
Software I need: Any text editor and a Web host with PHP
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 45 minutes

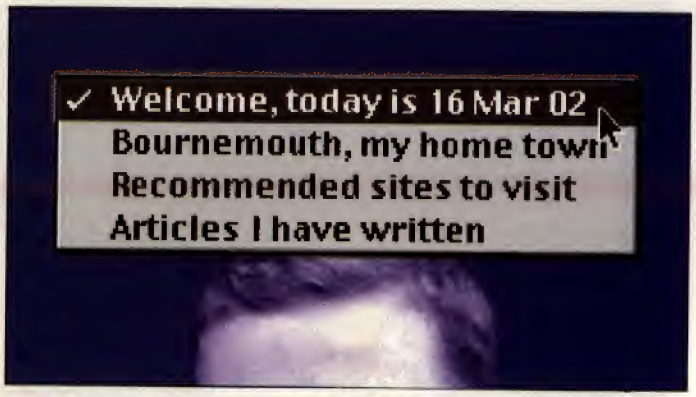
Use PHP to enhance a home page

MAKE VISITORS FEEL WELCOME BY GIVING YOUR HOME PAGE A PERSONAL TOUCH WITH PHP

PERSONAL HOME PAGES are often rather impersonal – but help is at hand in the shape of a few nifty tricks that can turn any site into a more interactive and individual offering.

PHP is the ideal tool for adding personal touches to a site, as it makes light work of handy features like cookies and form-to-email submissions. This workshop aims to give you a few ideas on how to personalise a page using PHP, with just a few simple alterations of your site's existing code.

You can see how these features work on a real page by visiting **www.jamesseabright.com**, which is the site that is featured in the screenshots on these pages.



1 Display the current date

One of the most basic ways of giving a page a fresh feel is to print the date. To add the date as shown above, this code was used: <? echo date ("d M y"); ?>. There are options for formatting the date and time – see **www.php.net/manual/en/function.date.php** for the full story.

```
<?
setcookie('visitedbefore', 'yes', time()+(86400*365), "", "www.bright-choice.co.uk", 0);
?>

Setcookie syntax (see also www.php.net/manual/en/function.setcookie.php)
setcookie(variable-name, variable-value, cookie-expiry, cookie-path, cookie-domain, secure-only)
```

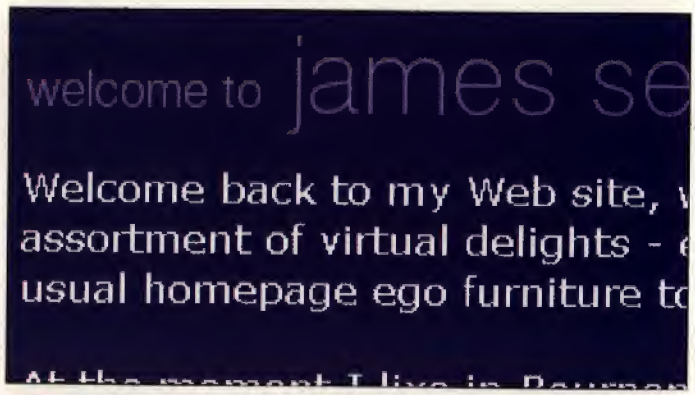
2 Code a cookie to welcome repeat visitors

Cookies are complicated beasts, but their use here is very simple: they allow you to distinguish repeat visitors to the site from those who are visiting for the first time. The code shown above must be added to the very start of your page, before the <html> tag itself.

```
<p>Welcome <? if(isSet($visitedbefore)) echo "back "; ?>to my Web site, where you'll find an assortment of virtual delights - everything from the usual homepage ego furniture to a few of my articles.</p>
```

3 Use cookie data to spot repeat visitors

If a cookie has been set, the variable names and values it contains will be transferred into the current session automatically. There is no fiddly cookie retrieval work to be done. The code above simply tests for the '$visitedbefore' variable and adds a word to the page if it exists.



4 Wider uses for cookies as visitor trackers

This example of using a cookie is deliberately simple. It is just as easy to add a whole chunk of HTML when you spot a repeat visitor, and by altering the cookie expiry time you could even distinguish between visitors who have seen the site in the last month and those who have not.

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```
<form action="<? print($PHP_SELF); ?>" method="post">
<table border="0" cellspacing="5">
<tr><td>Name</td><td><input type="text" name="name"
size="20"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Email</td><td><input type="text" name="email"
size="20"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Site</td><td><input type="text" name="sitename"
size="20"></td></tr>
<tr><td>URL</td><td><input type="text" name="url"
value="http://" size="20"><br></td></tr></table>
<input type="submit" value="Click here to send in details"
size="10">
</form>
```

5 Create your own form-to-email system

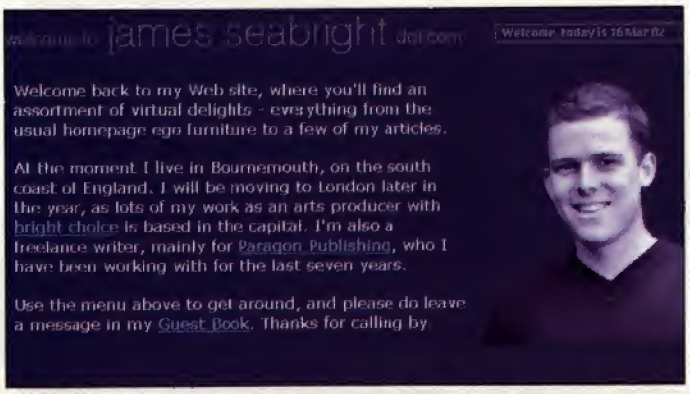
Asking users to contribute something to your site is a good way of making them feel involved. The code here creates a form which visitors are invited to use to submit favourite links. The PHP in the first line will make the form be submitted back to the current page.

```
if(IsSet($name)) mail("site@bright-choice.co.uk", "Site
Submission", "Name $name Email $email Site $sitename
URL $url", "From: $email\r\n");

Mail syntax (see also
www.php.net/manual/en/function.mail.php)
mail(email-recipient, email-subject, email-body, email-
headers)
```

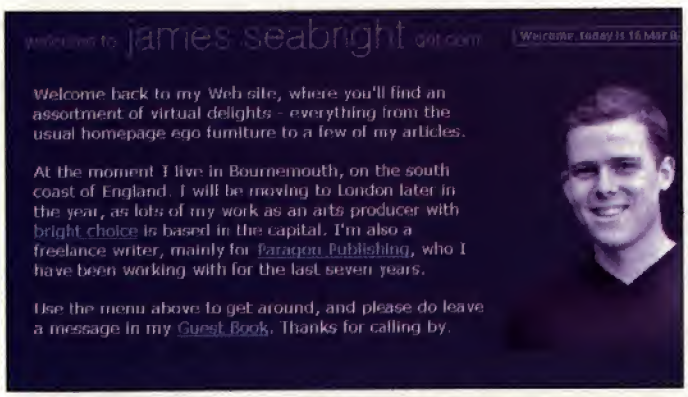
6 Turn form input into an email

Place this code at the top of the page with the cookie code. When the form has been submitted, the 'if' statement will leap into action, creating an email that contains all the form variables. This example does not tell the user that the submission was successful.



7 Alternative fill-in form applications

If you're a trusting type, you could use a form like the one created here to automatically add a link to your Web page, thus creating a link guestbook. Take a look at **http://yelvington.com/annotate.php3** for a working example and free code to get the system working on your page.



8 Switch your home page to PHP

For any of this code to work, your Web server must recognise it is dealing with PHP, so you'll need to rename your file with a '**.php**' extension instead of '**.html**'. Most Web servers will recognise '**index.php**' as a valid alternative to '**index.html**', thus avoiding any visible change to your site's URL.

Web resources

PHP Faqts
www.faqts.com/knowledge-base/index.phtml
Excellent resource with answers to all sorts of PHP problems.

PHP Official Site
www.php.net
You can find the all-important PHP manual here, which is the definitive reference to the language.

PHP Builder
www.phpbuilder.com
Hundreds of code snippets and a smattering of informative articles make this site a must-see for the keen PHP coder.

Jargon buster

PHP
Hypertext Pre-Processor (PHP) is a powerful scripting language that is easy to learn, especially for anyone familiar with JavaScript or Perl. Unlike JavaScript, it doesn't rely on browser compatibility, as it is a server-side scripting technology. Another of its attractive features, especially for Web site builders is that it integrates very easily with HTML, meaning that static sites can be speedily converted to all-singing, all-dancing PHP vehicles.

Variable
This is a very common programming term. Variables are like pigeonholes for storing information. The name of the variable is the label on the pigeonhole, distinguishing it from all the others. The content of the pigeonhole is the 'value' of the variable. In PHP, as in Perl scripting, variables are easily spotted by the dollar ($) sign at the start of their name.

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In brief:
Task: Create an animated front end with LiveMotion 2.0
Software I need: Adobe LiveMotion 2.0 (from **www.adobe.com**)
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 4 Hours +

Creating an animated Web site front end in LiveMotion 2.0

FEW PROGRAMS ARE BETTER EQUIPPED FOR WEB ANIMATION THAN ADOBE'S LIVEMOTION. HERE, **CLIVE PARKER** SHOWS YOU HOW TO USE THE LATEST VERSION TO CREATE A VISUALLY STUNNING FRONT END

LIVEMOTION 2 IS Adobe's application for creating web animations in the Macromedia Flash **.SWF** file format. As such, the first version of LiveMotion was a direct competitor to Macromedia's Flash 5, but it was missing one vital function – scripting. Now, LiveMotion 2.0 is here and it includes the ability to write scripts in the ActionScript format.

This opens up a world of possibilities to anyone who wants to create complex, high quality interactive animations for the Web. Don't get us wrong, we do like using both Flash 5 and Flash MX, but we honestly believe that LiveMotion 2 is easier to use and more intuitive than its rival from Macromedia. And it's cheaper too; the official price if you buy direct from Adobe is just £175, about half the price of Flash MX.

You've been framed

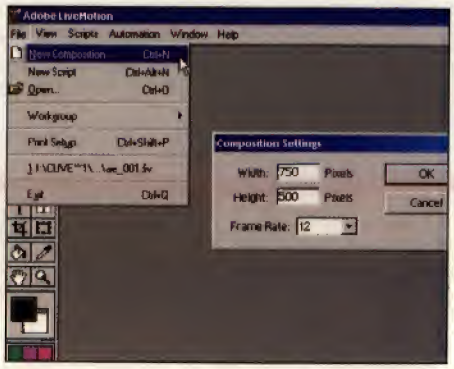
LiveMotion's timeline layout – we won't call it unique because it's very similar to Adobe's After Effects – is one of the simplest to master. Each object imported into the movie appears on the timeline as a duration bar. By dragging the ends of the bar you can determine the exact start and end frames for the object. Each object has it's own set of parameters that can be accessed from the timeline window.

This makes it very easy to change the parameters of an object. Say you want an image to fade in over a period of two seconds, you simply select the start frame and create an opacity keyframe with the level of opacity set to 0% using the Opacity tool palette. Now select the frame where you want the image to be fully visible and create another opacity keyframe, and then use the Opacity palette to set it to 100%. It takes a couple of seconds to set up, and every transform tool available in LiveMotion 2 is just as easy to master.

Cartoon central

In this tutorial we're building a front end to a series of Web pages and Flash animations for an animation festival taking place in Bristol called Animated Encounters. The site will contain 12 samples of animation from the festival in RealVideo and QuickTime format featuring the likes of Aardman's Angry Kid and others. Other content will include an image gallery, information and details of all the events taking place.

The front end will provide an animated filmstrip containing images from each of the featured animations, a looping series of still images to launch the streaming video windows and active links to other parts of the Flash animation. The finished animation and all of the streaming video clips can be seen on the HTV West Web site from 20 April at **www.htvwest.com/animated**.

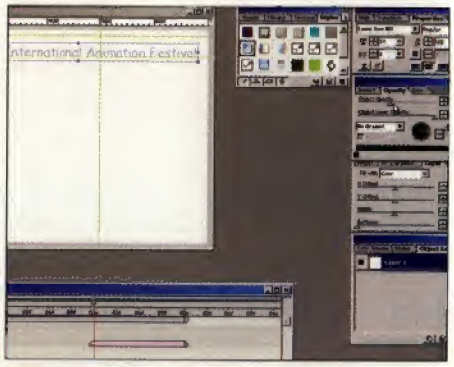


1 Create your workspace

Go to the 'File' menu and select the 'New Composition' command. In the dialog box that opens set the pixel size for your Web site front end. In this case we're going to be setting the animation size to 700 x 400 pixels.

4 Positioning the graphic

The image you import will appear centred in the Composition window and on the timeline it at frame 1. Resize and reposition the image as desired in your composition. This splash screen image will appear full size then shrink and move.



7 Adding text objects

Select 'Text' and use the 'Properties' palette to select the font and its size. We've used 'Opacity transform' to fade in the text at the two-second position with a setting of 0% opacity at two seconds and 100% at three seconds.

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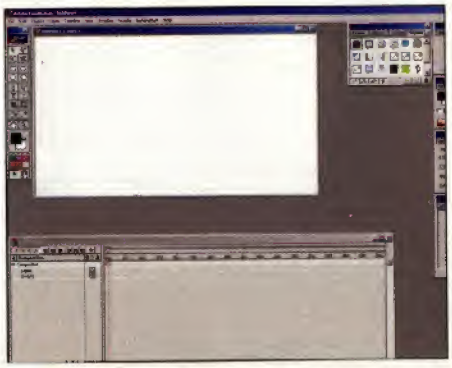
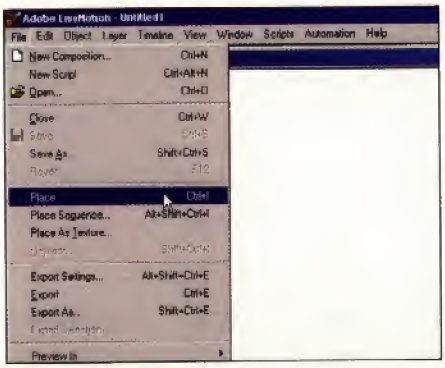


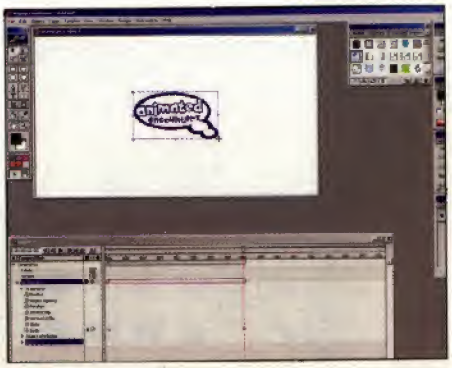
2 Organise your screen

It's good working practice to organise your LiveMotion 2.0 layout so you can work with the minimum amount of fuss. Line up the work palettes down the right, place the timeline along the bottom and the Composition window at the top.



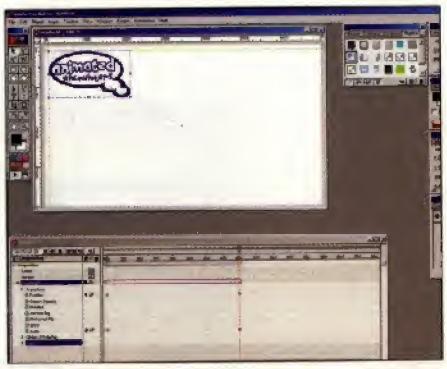
3 Import your graphics

You should make your main bitmap and vector graphics in an external graphics application like Photoshop Elements. To import graphics, go to the 'File' menu and select the 'Place' command. Use the file selector to pick the images to import.



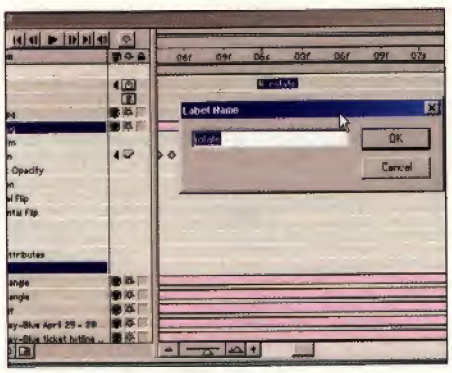
5 Reposition and duration

Drag the image's duration bar to the timeline's two-second point. Now, click the 'Scale' icon to set a keyframe. Move the playback marker to two seconds and click the 'Scale' checkbox to set a second keyframe. Resize the image.



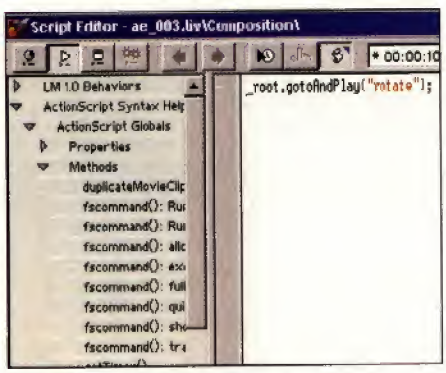
6 Change of position

Go back to the zero position and select the 'Position' icon in the 'Transform' list to set the start position keyframe. Move the playback head to two seconds then click on the 'Position' checkbox and then drag the image to its new position.



8 Adding labels

Create more text objects and import more images as required. To insert labels on the timeline move the playback head to the position you want the label and click on the 'Labels' icon in the timeline window. Type a label name and click 'OK'.



9 ActionScript behaviour

Place the playback marker at the end point of the loop and click on the Script icon in the timeline window. In the script editor type '_root.gotoAndPlay("rotate");', this makes the animation loop back to the 'rotate' label.

Jargon Buster

ActionScript

ActionScript is a variation of JavaScript that has been designed to work within Flash animations. It's almost exactly the same as traditional JavaScript so if you can code in that you will find ActionScript easy to master.

Automation Script

An automation script enables you to perform repetitive or complex tasks within an active composition. These tasks can be performed using the LiveMotion interface but the scripts let you perform them automatically.

Live Tabs

A Live Tab is simply an automation script with a user interface grafted onto it so that it appears as a dialog box or as a palette. A live tab could appear as a palette that enables you to create star shapes with many different parameters such as the number of points.

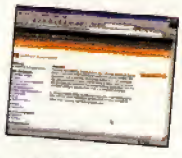
Timeline

The timeline is the section of LiveMotion 2 where you control what happens and when it happens. Each object with a LiveMotion composition appears on the timeline, the time when it 'appears' and 'disappears' is determined by its duration bar.

Web resources

LiveMotion Expert Center

http://studio.adobe.com/expertcenter/livemotion/main.html



The LiveMotion Expert Center is packed with tutorials, tips, ActionScripts, shapes and sound files to help you get the most from LiveMotion 2.0.

Adobe LiveMotion Resources

graphicssoft.about.com/cs/livemotion

This site has a huge area devoted to LiveMotion, albeit mainly version one. Even so, there's a good selection of shapes, styles and templates you can download plus over 20 tutorials ranging from creating dancing text to adding a preloaded animation

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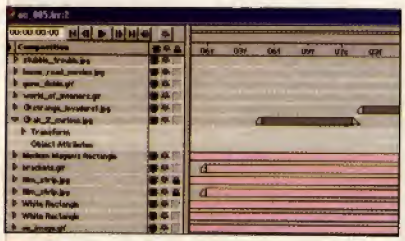
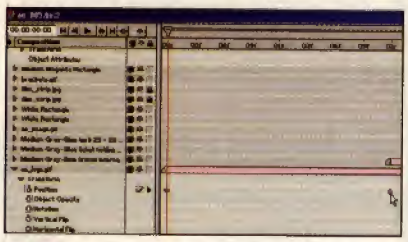
The quick method

THE TIMELINE WINDOW is where you control exactly what happens in your Flash movie and when it happens, it's where you define the animation from start to finish. New objects are automatically added to the top of the Timeline Navigator and represent the stacking order of objects in the animation. You can drag objects up and down the timeline to alter the stacking order; you can also make objects invisible by toggling the eye icon next to its name.



1 Duration bars

Each object in the timeline is listed in the Timeline Navigator to the left of the timeline and is shown as a Duration bar in the timeline. You can alter the number of frames that an object appears for by dragging the end points of the duration bar.



2 Timeline Navigator

Each object in the Timeline Navigator has its own drop down menu where you can adjust its properties such as position, size, rotation and so on. By clicking on the icon of any property a keyframe is create in the timeline for that object.

3 Rollovers and states

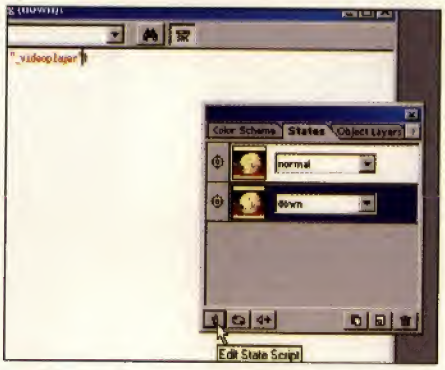
Any object with more than one state – eg rollovers – has a separate set of properties for each version of the object. A rollover with a normal and a down state can have each state adjusted individually by double-clicking its entry in the Timeline Navigator.

10 Creating vector objects

We're importing some bitmaps to serve as links to pop-up windows. We want to create a pink background that matches the left-hand image, so we're creating a filled rectangle with the Rectangle Tool. Use the guides to size the rectangle.

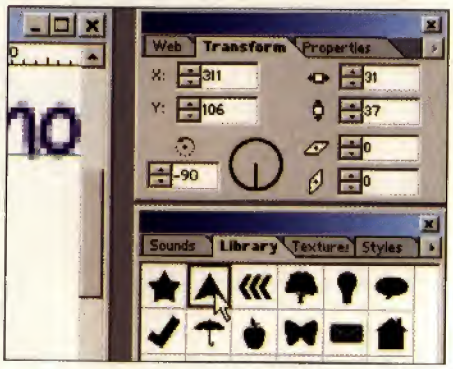
11 Creating pop-up windows

To attach the pop-up window behaviour to specific objects in the animation (bitmap images in this case) we're using the 'States' palette to create a fake rollover. Select the object to trigger the pop-up then add a Down state using the States palette.



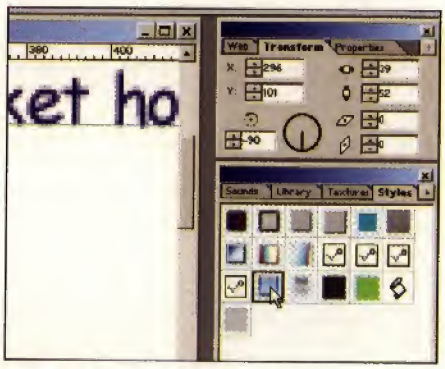
12 Adding the behaviour

Now open the Script Editor. Use the getURL command with the file name and window name of the pop-up as a parameter like this: 'getURL("strange_invaders.html","_videoplayer");'. This opens the window when the image is clicked.



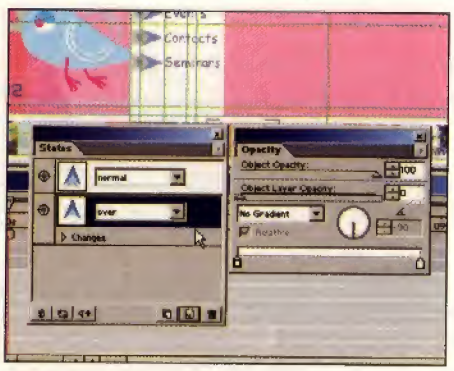
13 Using library items

Instead of creating navigation buttons from scratch you can use some of the built-in shapes in the library. Select the arrow shape in the Library palette then use the Transform palette to rotate it clockwise by 90 degrees. Resize as necessary.



14 Shapes with style

The original arrow shape is a little boring. Select the arrow object in the Composition window then select the Styles palette. To apply a style double-click on it. When you've found one you like copy and paste as many copies as you need.



15 Navigation buttons

The States menu creates rollover states. We've used the Opacity command to remove the drop shadow when you move your mouse over the button. Use the down state to jump to a label using the gotoAndPlay command, as described earlier.

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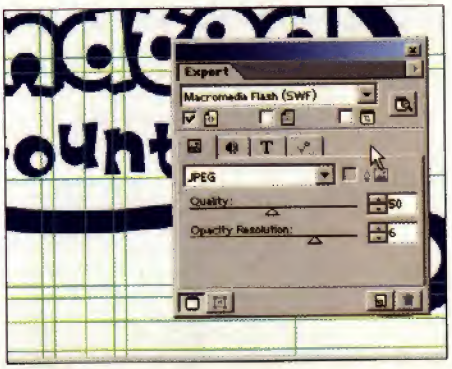
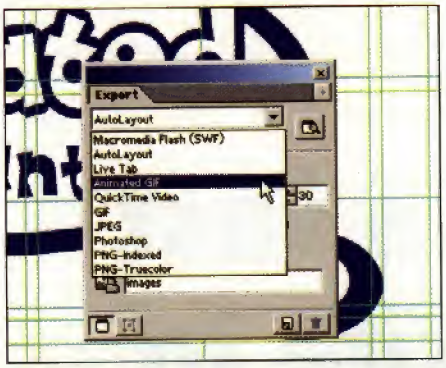


16 Exporting as Flash

Because the animation uses ActionScript you must export it as a **.SWF** file. There are other formats available but they export the animation only, any scripted behaviours will be lost. You can adjust the Export settings using the Export palette.



17 Other formats

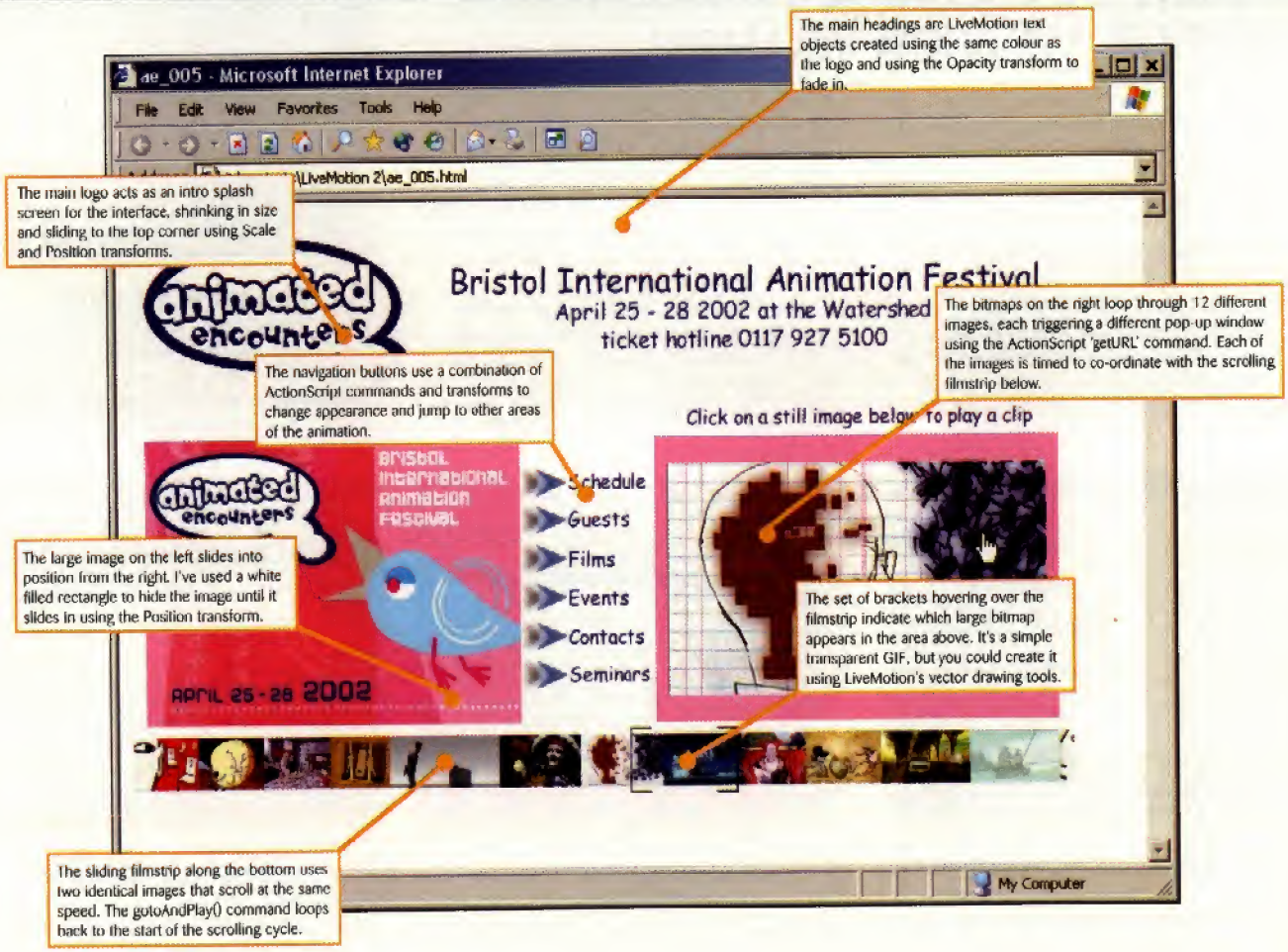
You can save your animations as many different types of file, even as an animated GIF. Be wary of the file size if you do this, the Flash file for this tutorial was just over 200k, while the animated GIF version came in at over three megabytes.

18 Final export

When you are satisfied that your animation is working as required, export it as a Macromedia Flash file. You can save an HTML file with the export so you can instantly check that your Web site front end is working properly.

The guided tour

How Clive created this front end using Adobe LiveMotion 2.0



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In brief:
Task: Make a quick loading multimedia Web site
Software I need: Macromedia Dreamweaver 4.0
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: 1 Hour

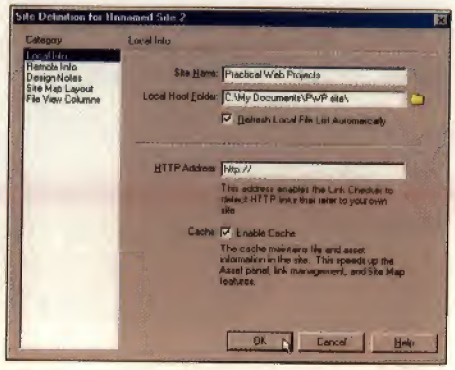
Creating a fast loading site in Dreamweaver

ATTRACT VISITORS TO YOUR SITE WITH A STYLISH AND FAST-LOADING MULTIMEDIA INTERFACE. WE SHOW YOU HOW...

THE ADVENT OF What You See Is What You Get site-building applications has had a major impact on the way we put Web content together and Macromedia's Dreamweaver 4 is one of the best of these programs, thanks to an unrivalled collection of features and general ease of use. Indeed, anyone with a basic knowledge of computers can soon pick up the basics.

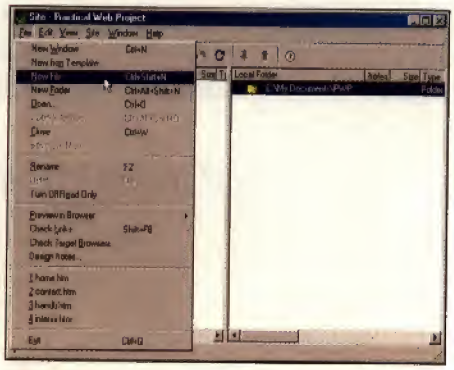
This is made all the more simplistic due to Dreamweaver's 'drag and drop' make up, which allows you to simply place objects like text or graphics on a blank page and build a site around them. What's more, Dreamweaver affords you the option of building your site from scratch by completely hand-coding your computer code, or HTML, until your Web pages are designed. The beauty of all this is that both intermediates and beginners can alternate between the two design methods.

During the course of this tutorial, we'll be showing you just how easy it can be to make your first fast-loading Web site and, with just a little thought and planning, make it look eye-catching and functional at the same time.



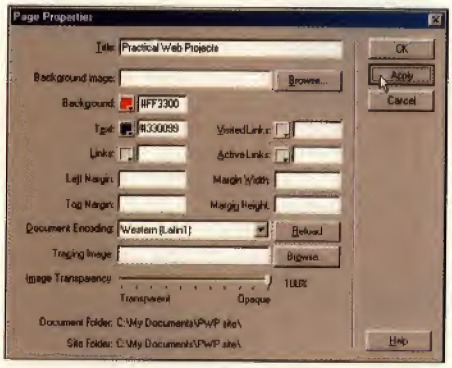
1 Getting started

Launch Dreamweaver and navigate to 'Site' in the menu bar and then scroll down to 'New Site'. Here you need to specify the Local Info, which is the name of your site along with the Root directory where you will keep all of your Web site elements.



2 The main window

With the Root folder created you now have a work area. The right-hand pane shows the site being created, while the pane on the left, is where you connect to the Web server to upload pages. Create a new page from the 'File' menu.

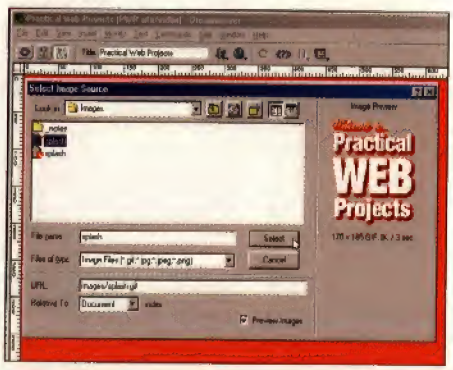


3 Modify your properties

Go to the 'Modify' menu and a box will appear. Here you can specify the page's title, along with background, text and link colours. When you're done, go to File and 'Save As' then name your page 'index.htm'.

4 Make a splash

As a neat intro to our site, we're creating a splash page. Click on the 'Insert Table' tab and create a table with the settings shown. This can then be used to place the artwork we've created in our image-editing software. Click 'OK'.



5 Adding your artwork

Now go to the 'Insert Image' tab and navigate to your saved images. Ensure that your mouse has been clicked inside the table, not outside. Click 'OK' and the image will then appear on your Web page.

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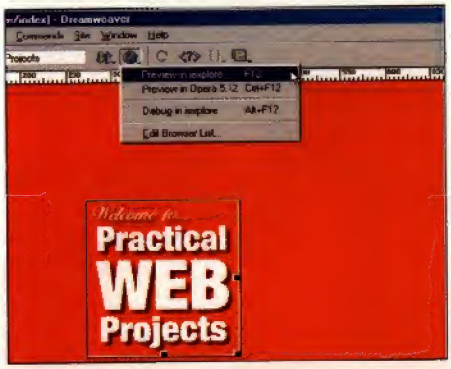
6 Aligning images

Right-click with your mouse inside the table to align the graphic exactly where you want it. By putting your graphics inside a table, you will be able to get much more dependable results when the site is viewed in a Web browser.

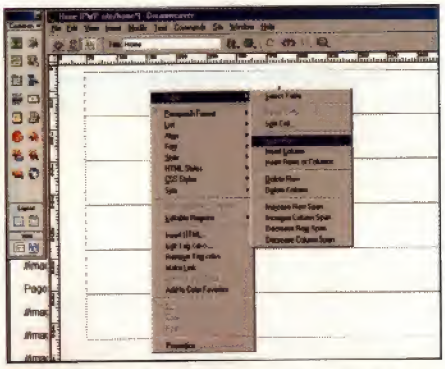
7 Making a link

Use the 'Properties controller' to specify your link by creating another page in the same way, calling it home and then saving it into the root folder. The 'Properties tab can then be filled in as shown, including an Alt tag description.



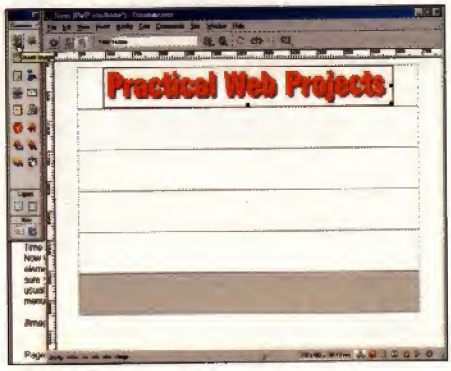
8 Check as you go

Test your pages as you build them. Luckily, Dreamweaver makes provision for this and you can preview your work in Internet Explorer, or any other browser you specify by clicking on this button at the top of the main interface window.



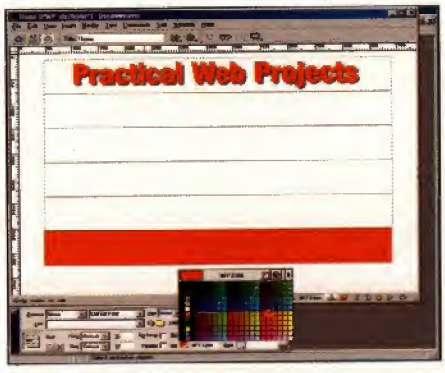
9 Building the main page

Set up the main home page by opening it from the root folder. Set the page properties as described in earlier steps. Now use the 'Insert Table' button to divide the table into various cells (as shown above). Right-click to find these options.



10 Time to add artwork

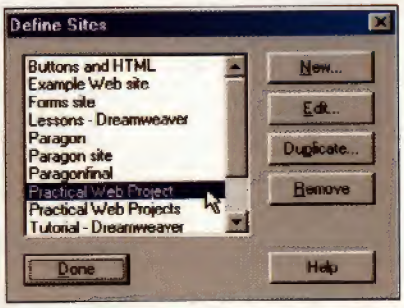
Now we want to dress up our page with some graphics to give it some style. Make sure you click inside the appropriate cell before adding graphics. If you make a mistake, just select the 'Undo' option from the 'Edit' menu.



11 Adjusting the cells

You can also specify specific colour for any of the cells. Here we're colouring in the bottom cell in the same red as the logo using the Properties Inspector. This cell will form the basis for our navigation buttons.

Setting up your site



IT'S ESSENTIAL THAT you set up your site carefully. Make a plan on paper before you start to ensure that you have a good idea of the sort of pages you wish to create and the content that you want to add. Once you start building the site, ensure that you save all of your Web site elements in one central folder. This goes for images as well as pages, plus any original artwork you might have created. That way, if you need to alter anything, it can be easily tracked down and changed in no time.

Jargon Buster

Understanding the terms

There are many technical terms surrounding Web site construction that can appear more than a little daunting. However, once you have mastered the basics you soon realise that many of these are perfectly harmless. The Root folder, for example, is merely the central folder that holds all of the components of your Web site. The Web Host is basically the Internet Service Provider who gives a home to your finished Web site once it is uploaded to their server. The server, meanwhile, is simply the main computer where lots of Web sites are stored in order for people to access them over the Internet.

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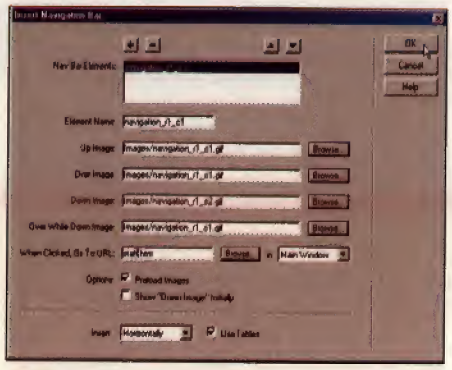
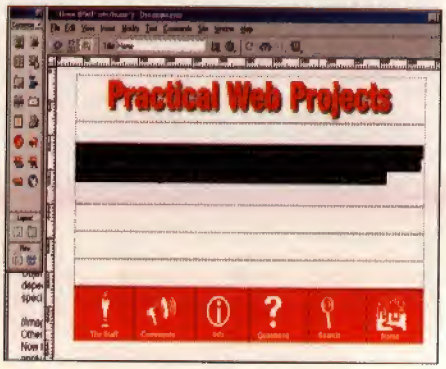


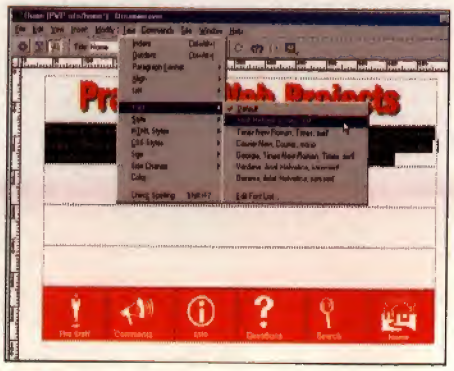
12 Inserting buttons

Navigation buttons are essential for getting around a site. We've created a navigation bar in Fireworks, so now we'll add this to the bottom cell. Go to the Object toolbar and select 'Insert Navigation Bar'.



13 Other details

Now you've created the main framework of your page, you can start applying other elements. Click in the cell as shown and start typing any body text you need. Use the built in spellchecking facility to avoid any embarrassing errors.

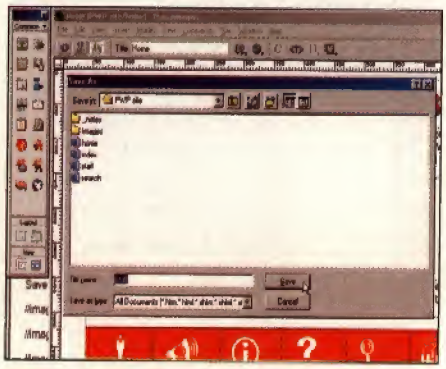


14 Style it up

Change fonts by selecting the relevant text and picking a typeface from the 'Text' menu. You can also format the font, using this menu or the Properties controller in order to change alignment and other styling features.

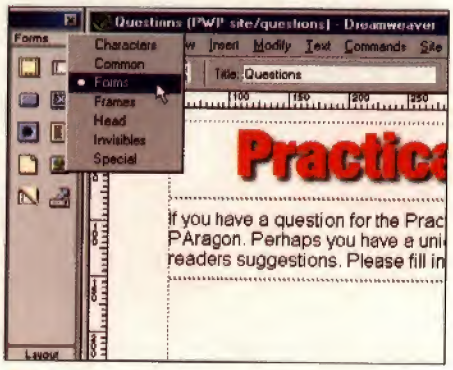
15 Additional images

Click on the Insert Image tab to add extra images anywhere you like. Once you're happy with the general layout, you can start 'Saving As' and giving the pages new names. This means that you can duplicate as many pages as you need.



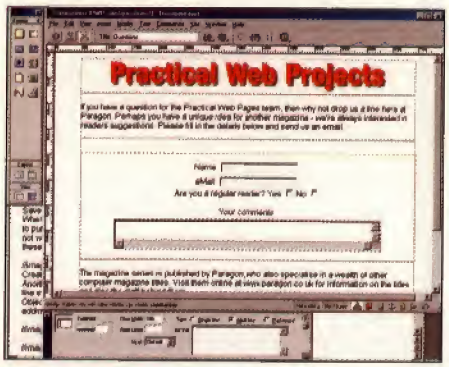
16 Save to the right location

When you're saving the pages you create, be sure to select the main root folder to put them in. Otherwise you will lose pages, or start getting problems with links not working correctly.



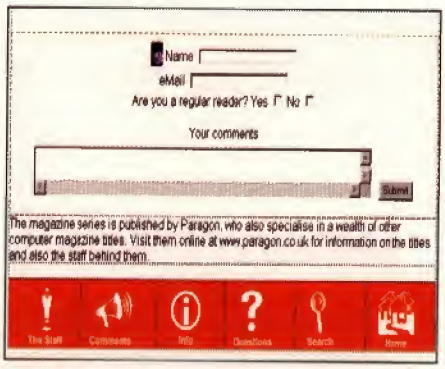
17 Create a contact page

Dreamweaver allows us to generate forms for things like email. Our Comments page is being edited by using the drop down tab in the 'Object Controller'. We'll start by adding the main form container in the top left hand corner of the tab.



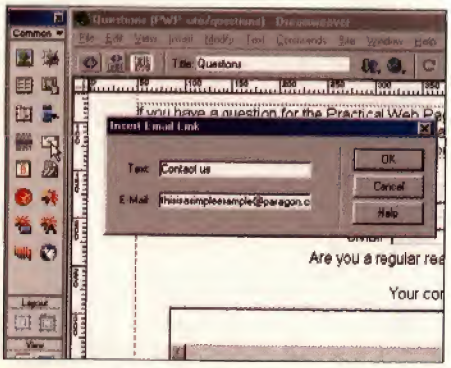
18 Editing the form

Use the 'Properties inspector' to tweak anything that doesn't look right. In the case of our Comments box, we specified a wider writing area to prevent needless scrolling. Other elements in your form can also be altered accordingly.



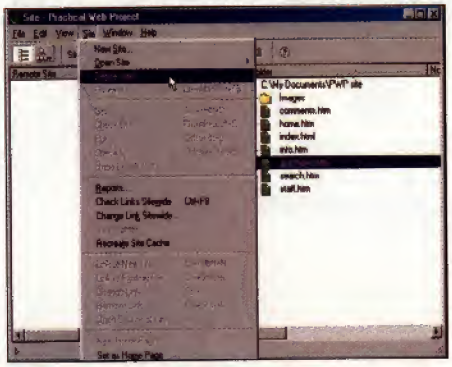
19 Finishing form touches

We also need to add a Submit button that will be pressed when someone wants to email you. Don't also forget to add a Hidden Field tag. This must contain the email address information that you want the completed from to be sent to.



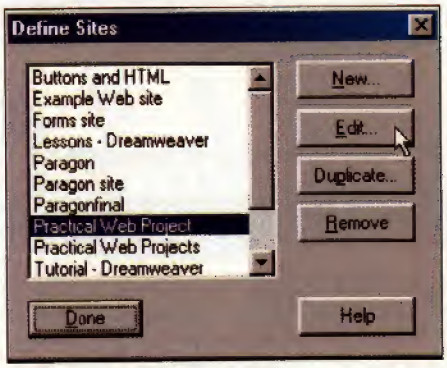
20 Easier options

For a more straightfoward approach click on the 'Add Email button in the 'Objects palette'. This allows your site to open a visitor's default email client when they click on it to contact you.



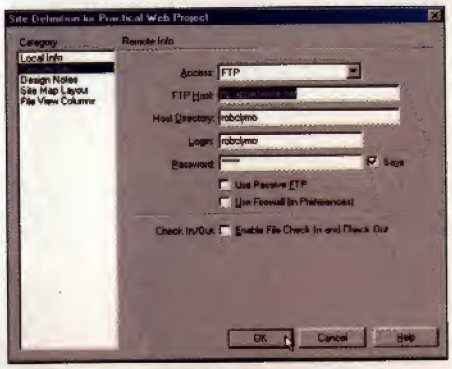
21 Stay organised

Your main root folder should now look like this. HTML files are stored on the right along with our images, which have all been retained in their own, unique images folder. This should make uploading a breeze, so go to the 'Define Site' tab.



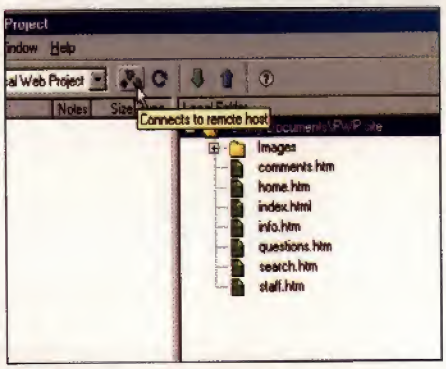
22 Select your site

A small window will now open and reveal all of the sites you are currently working on or have made. Click on the one you're currently creating and select the 'Edit' option from the right-hand side of the window.



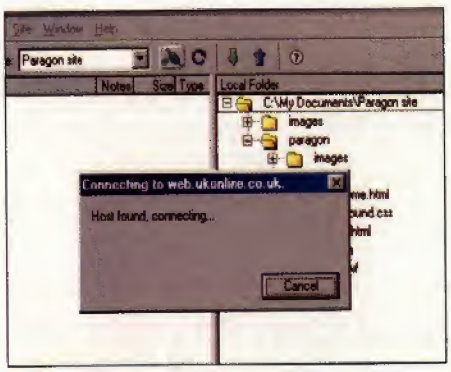
23 Your FTP settings

Upload your site by typing your FTP details into the window as shown here. Typing them correctly is very important or else they won't work. You can find out your FTP address from your Web space provider.



24 Get connected

We now need to move all of the files on our home PC to the server, using File Transfer Protocol. This should only require you to be connected for a few minutes, depending on the size of the site.



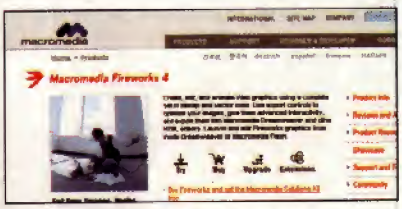
25 Move up or down

Once you're connected, simply move the files to and from the server using the arrow buttons next to the 'Connect' tab along the top of the program. You will see your files appear in the left hand window pane as they move over.

26 The finished site

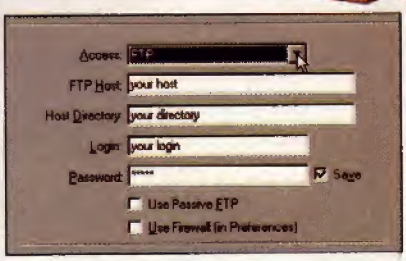
You should now be able to type in the Web address where your site was uploaded and see the finished item. If you encounter any problems try connecting again and copying the files over once more. That's all there is to it.

Web resources



The secret to a great site is often in how you put the graphic elements together. For tutorials and other valuable information why not try visiting the home of image-editing programs. First port of call should be **www.macromedia.com** of course. However, other valuable sites are **www.adobe.com** or **www.jasc.com**. All of these companies offer a wealth of useful information on how to get the best from your Web images. What's more, they all offer great tools for speeding up the job in hand and have something to offer all types of budget.

Jargon Buster



FTP

This is the term for the process of uploading, or copying your files from a home PC to a Web server so that other people can view them and stands for File Transfer Protocol. You can get standalone software programs that enable you to carry out this process, but Dreamweaver has it's own tool built into the interface of the program. This means that you can manage all of your uploading and downloading chores from within one program. It also has the benefit of speeding up complex and important site design changes.

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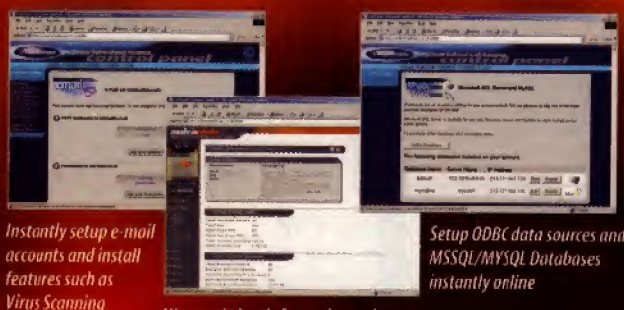

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Your Business Online

EXPERT ADVICE ON CREATING PROFITABLE SMALL BUSINESSES

Welcome...

A WARM WELCOME back to another pulsating edition of Your Business Online.

The big news this month has to be the launch of our very own Your Business Online Web site! Yes, thanks to the efforts of that lovely chap at Smallbiz UK, Gerard Liston, we now have our own Web presence at **www.practicalinternet.smallbiz.uk.com** where you can post questions, read Gerard's pearls of wisdom and access a host of business-related resources. And because the Net's all about sharing the wealth, you can even help out fellow readers by providing them with answers.

Returning to the matter in hand, this month we bring you new about a new set of government regulations that will affect every small business trading on the Web, an essential feature on choosing the right domain name strategy for your firm and a detailed tutorial on how to set up your own eCommerce store with Microshop Online Professional.

Your Business Online: it's about your business and it's now online – enjoy!

Paul Newman
Editor

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Use our tutorial to add shopping cart facilities to your business

Web hosting listings p112
Pick the perfect home for your business

Regulation looms large for eBusiness

NEW ECOMMERCE LEGISLATION SET TO GIVE SMALL BUSINESSES A HEADACHE

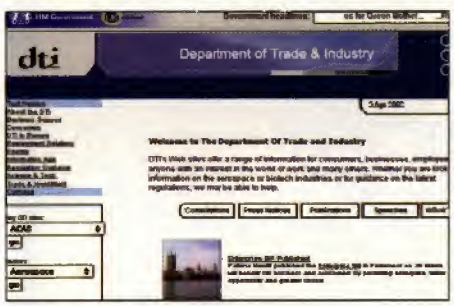
ONLINE BUSINESSES WILL soon have to become familiar with a raft of new legislation governing the way eCommerce is carried out. This comes as a result of the government's plans to introduce a major European Union Directive that will affect online businesses.

The E-Commerce Directive, which was supposed to have been implemented by all European states by 17 January of this year, covers a wide-range of areas that will have a profound effect on the way small businesses currently operate.

Effectively, the legislation will affect every business involved in selling goods online, using the Internet for direct marketing purposes, storing databases full of customer information or providing network services.

While many of the areas covered, such as clarification that only the laws of the sellers country apply when selling to EU states, should make life easier for online stores, they will also put extra strain on small firms in terms of costs and keeping up with an almost never ending stream of red tape.

"The most significant part for ordinary businesses is a requirement for member states to accept electronic contracts, although it specifies no methods for electronic signature. If we think how long it took faxes to be recognised as legally binding, then it can be seen as a real step forward. Overall, it's quite a good thing, which is unusual for an EU directive" said Actinic CEO, Kevin Grumball.



See what effect the government's new EU Directive will have on your business at the dti Web site

The new regulations are not yet sitting on the statute books, however the government has produced draft legislation that should have passed a consultation period by the time you read this.

You can find out more about the new regulations at **www.dti.gov.uk/cii/ecommerce/europeanpolicy/ecommerce_directive.shtml**.

News in brief

→No sex please, we're eCommerce fans

A new survey claims that Internet users are now more interested in eCommerce than sex. Penn State University analysed the Internet habits of 200,000 regular users of the Excite search engine. The four-year study found that in 1997 one in six searches were about sex, while in 2001 only one in 12 searches were sex-related. During the corresponding period the amount of searches for business or travel-related sites rose by 80 per cent.

→Byers derailed by cybersquatters

Beleaguered Transport Secretary Steven Byers is being taunted by a cheeky cybersquatter. Richard Laverick, a 21-year-old Web designer from Durham, snapped up the domain name www.networkrail.org.uk for just £6 after realising the government had failed to register it on behalf of Network Rail, the new name for Railtrack. Avoid falling into the same trap by reading our domain strategy feature on page 104.

→Follow the LeaderPhone

Internet firm Leader Technologies has launched a revolutionary new product that it hopes will enable large groups of Internet businessmen to communicate more effectively than ever before. The LeaderPhone (www.leaderphone.com) claims to marry conference calls with Internet telephony so that up to 30 people can talk to each other without the need for an operator, instead one person acts as host and controls calls from a Web-based interface.

→Islands in the sun

Inhabitants of a small group of islands in the Pacific are enjoying unparalleled exposure thanks to the commercial implications of its assigned domain name. Tokelau, which is 500 miles form Western Samoa, has registered .tk domain names for all of the Fortune 500 companies and is giving them away for free in an attempt to put itself on the map. Interested businesses can visit www.dot.tk to sign up for Web hosting and domain registration Tokelau style.

Email marketing number one in US

RESEARCH SUGGESTS EMAIL IS THE BEST WAY OF REACHING POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

ONE OF THE best ways small businesses can generate new customers and keep existing ones is to use email as a direct marketing tool says a new report.

According to a study that's been published by the Direct Marketing Association, nearly two thirds of US companies managed to increase their sales in 2001 as a direct result of using email marketing.

Although the biggest increase in revenue from email marketing was seen by medium-sized enterprises (59.8 per cent), 43 per cent of small businesses quizzed said that their sales had increased.

Interestingly, the news corresponded with another survey into email marketing habits, which revealed that email has now overtaken traditional direct mail shots by post in the US. According to the research, which was undertaken by GartnerG2, online businesses now see email as a more cost effective way to acquire and retain customers.

"Within days of launching an email campaign, response can be measured and actions taken. Marketers can gauge response quickly and react by making adjustments on an email campaign before delivery of a direct mail campaign is complete" said GartnerG2's research director, Denise Garcia.

HOW TO Expert eCommerce tips

STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL EMAIL MARKETING STRATEGIES

- ✔Address existing customers by name wherever possible
- ✔Don't use HTML email or embedded multimedia files
- ✔Encourage customer feedback and then comment on it
- ✔Never email customers more than once a day with news
- ✔Ensure that all emails include instructions for opting out

SDSL set to give UK firms a boost

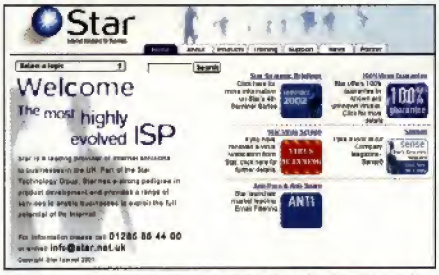
STAR INTERNET LAUNCHES THE NEXT GENERATION OF BROADBAND ACCESS FOR BUSINESSES

A NEW FORM of ADSL is set to relive businesses from the frustrations of unreliable broadband connections.

As revealed in last month's Your Business Online news section, the current ADSL technology on offer for businesses has so far proved unreliable, despite the welcome reductions in pricing.

SDSL stands for Symmetrical Digital Subscriber Line and is being pioneered by the service provider Star Internet. The technology promises the same high-speed Internet access benefits currently offered by ADSL, but none of the unreliability.

SDSL is both faster than ADSL, thanks to its contention ratio of 5:1 (most ADSL products are 20:1) and, because the line is symmetric, offers the same upload and download speeds. More importantly, the product comes with a service level agreement, guaranteeing that your ISP will come out and fix any technical problems that may occur.



Just about managed to catch up with ADSL technology? It could all be set to change if SDSL takes off

"Reliable connectivity is a prerequisite for any business wanting to get the most from the Internet. By providing a service level agreement Star is offering its customers not just technical support but piece of mind" said Star Internet's marketing director, Joss White.

To find out how much SDSL will cost you'll need to contact Star for a quote, although the ISP is offering connection speeds of 512k, 1Mb and 2Mb. Learn more about Star's SDSL products by visiting the firm's Web site – **www.star.net.uk**.

Dotcom fightback gathers pace

ECOMMERCE BOOMING THANKS TO CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE

BRITAIN'S ONLINE RETAILING sector is expanding faster than ever before thanks to high levels of customer satisfaction.

According to the Interactive Media in Retail Group (IMRG), the UK is emerging from the well-documented dotcom slowdown to such an extent that industry growth in the UK is ten times faster than that in the US.

Consumer confidence in online stores is helping to drive the dotcom fightback

Online retailing in the UK currently accounts for three per cent of all retail sales, which compares favourably with a figure of just 1.2 percent for the US.

The IMRG's findings were backed up further by the results of a survey undertaken by NOP.

According to the survey, 92 per cent of customers were happy with the service being provided by Internet stores. Another telling statistic revealed that three in four of these shoppers intended to shop online again.

"Online retailers are starting to get their customer relationship management strategies right" said NOP's Simon Chesire. "NOP's data shows that 73 per cent of those who emailed a company to make a complaint were satisfied with the response received."

Server downtime costs firms millions

INADEQUATE HOSTING ARRANGEMENTS COST SMALL BUSINESS A BOMB

ACCORDING TO RESEARCH published by Internet analysts The Yankee Group, the direct cost of unreliable Web servers and hosting to UK Internet firms is set to grow by 26 per cent in the next year to a whopping £715million.

Server reliability is seen as crucial to building a strong eCommerce operation. Worryingly, the figures in the report only take direct costs into account. Factors like loss of reputation and the cost of storing unsold goods are likely to see that figure of £715 million increase further still.

"More than ever firms must take action to protect themselves from downtime – ensuring that they are supported 24/7" said Nicholas Jeffery, chief operating officer of WorldPort.

Interestingly, experts are in agreement that the chief cause of excessive downtime is down to small businesses themselves. By cutting corners and attempting to host their Web sites in-house, firms are running the risk of having inadequate support systems.

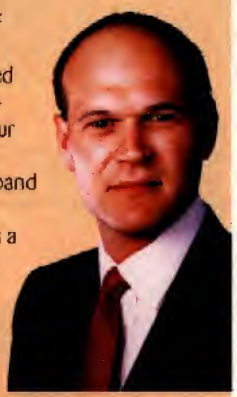
"Our advice to companies is either to look to expertise and capabilities of external hosting with managed service providers or to join the ongoing migration from in-house hosting to external providers" said Scott Smith, director of The Yankee Group.

Server downtime will cost UK firms over £700million in 2002

Freeserve accuses BT of unfair play

FORGET BROWSER WARS, HERE'S ISP WARS FREESERVE AND BT STYLE

FREESERVE'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE, John Pluthero, has accused BT of practising anti-competitive behaviour over the marketing campaign for broadband Internet services.



Pluthero: angry with BT

Pluthero, who has a history of getting involved in mud-slinging battles with ISPs, has reported BT to the telecoms watchdog Oftel over its £10 million broadband marketing campaign. He believes BT Wholesale gave BTopenworld advanced warning over ADSL price cuts, allowing them to gain an early foothold in the broadband marketplace.

"The Chinese walls that are supposed to exist between BTopenworld and BT Wholesale may be fooling Oftel," raged Pluthero, "but to the rest of us it's obvious these walls are paper-thin."

Freeserve, and all other ISPs must rely on BT Wholesale to provide them with access to the UK's broadband network. Because of this BT Wholesale and BTopenworld are supposed to operate as separate companies to prevent BTopenworld from gaining an unfair advantage in the marketplace.

Not surprisingly BT was quick to issue a flat denial of practising anti-competitive behaviour. Freeserve must now wait while Oftel investigates its complaint.

How did they do that? Anything Left-Handed

WHAT STARTED AS A SMALL RETAIL OUTLET IS NOW AN INTERNATIONAL NET BUSINESS – WE TALK TO **KEITH MILSOM** OF ANYTHING LEFT-HANDED TO FIND OUT HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED

The past couple of years have been good for Keith and Lauren Milsom, owners of Anything Left-Handed. The specialist retailer was originally set up in the late 1960s to cater for the 10 per cent or so of the population who are left-handed. Providing advice and products, the company ambled along in its niche market for around 20 years.

In late 2000, the first Anything Left-Handed site was launched. Keith Milsom admits that this incarnation of **www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk** was really "a foot in the water to see if the Internet would work for us". Although he now classes it as a test site, this opening gambit in the Web world still contained enough to entice a large number of punters to visit. "A lot of people contacted us asking if we would put more information on the site," comments Milsom.

Last summer, the stakes were upped, and the Anything Left-Handed Web team embarked on a redevelopment of the site. The 'team', incidentally, consists of Keith and Lauren, as well as technical guru Dennis Zekic – "he turns my commercial ideas into HTML and Perl". Since then, the growth of the site has been phenomenal. Compared to a sales average of one or two a day before the revamp, the site now totals around 30 orders a day.

In fact, about half of Anything Left-Handed's business now comes from the Net. Considering the retail shop's sales figures have remained steady throughout, you're effectively looking at a 100 per cent increase in turnover. "We don't like to think of ourselves as an Internet company, though," admits Keith Milsom. "This phrase makes people think of Boo.com and the like, and we're different to that. We've been around for years, for a start." Milsom's abiding advice to anyone wishing to become a dotcom millionaire is straightforward: "It's much better to convert an existing business into an Internet site, and go from there."

Actinic goodness

The Anything Left-Handed site has always used Actinic for its online shopping facilities. "It's a very simple product to use," comments Keith

Anything Left-Handed

TIME SCALE

- **1960s** – Anything Left-Handed shop is opened in London
- **Late 2000** – First anythingleft-handed.co.uk site is launched
- **June 2001** – Work begins on an update to the site
- **October 2001** – The revamped site is uploaded

Milsom. "The template-based interface means you can use it straight out of the box, then progress as you learn more." In essence, Actinic handles all the logistics of shopping, while Dennis Zekic, in particular, sorts out the dynamics of the site. Having created most of the site using standard WYSIWYG packages, the Actinic shop was then imported in.

"You're actually looking at two separate sites," admits Keith Milsom. The portal has been done entirely by us, while the shop is down to Actinic." Although these two sections are hosted in different locations, the team has been keen to maintain a uniform style. The shop section, for instance, now sports a navigation system that melds perfectly with the rest of the portal site. "There's nothing more annoying for a potential customer than clicking on the 'buy' button, then being taken to what looks like a completely different site." Milsom also suggests that this split second of indecision could actually dissuade people from completing the purchase – after all, if you're not sure you're still buying from the same people, would you carry on?

Lefty community

From the very start, the ethos of Anything Left-Handed has not been about making money. "A large part of the company is still providing information to our subscribers and visitors," states Keith Milsom. The 'Left-Handers' club is now run on the site, with some 30 or so new lefties signing up daily to the service. Following a 'passive' campaign to get people to join, the club now boasts 8,000 members. In fact, anyone judging the success of the site would have to look at the club at least as prominently as the goods sold. Milsom is just as happy to tell you that four per cent of site visitors join the club as six per cent of unique visitors go on to make a purchase.

In many ways, the longevity of the shop and the success of the club give Anythingleft-handed.co.uk a unique factor that many sites work hard to achieve but only few manage it – a genuine community feel. "Around 10 per cent of our visitors are repeats," confesses Milsom, "but there are some of them who come back a lot. The way I see it, there's a huge funnel at the home page of the site. Only a few people come out the bottom with orders. We need to build long term relationships with people who visit a lot. When all is said and done, they might buy after 10 or 20 visits."

The Anythingleft-handed.co.uk shop contains all you'd ever need to live the perfect alternative digit lifestyle

Joint Managing Director Keith Milsom

Joint Managing Director Lauren Milsom

Technical guru Dennis Zekic

The Anything Left-Handed site contains a number of 'sticky' elements, including an online club, for left-handed individuals to meet like-handed souls

International news

One of the major differences the conversion to being an Internet company has meant to Anything Left-Handed has been the significant upsurge in international orders and communication. "People manage to find our site from all over the world and want to get their hands on the stuff we sell" says a proud Milsom. For a former mail-order company whose business came mostly from the UK, getting an order from Puerto Rico still causes a few flurries of excitement.

These international aspects are also starting to lead to the opening of other avenues. "We're looking to open up other left-handed shops in the UK... and across the world," states Keith Milsom. The appeal of left-handed retail is not lost on visitors to the site either. "We get requests from people all over the world asking if they can sell our left-handed goods in their own country. Basically, they want to set up a business like ours." Milsom hints that several of these franchises are very close to completion, and that any deal would give the franchisee an exclusive marketing deal. He even mentions that some retailers could clone the Anythingleft-handed.co.uk site into their own language. "They sell the goods from their own site. We distribute the items to them." In this scenario, everyone's a winner.

Milsom also points out that the more international nature of the company hasn't caused any significant shipping problems. "We've been delivering worldwide for years," he maintains. One alteration that has been made is that the free delivery on orders over £50 offer has now been extended from the UK to the whole of the world. "This has seen a big impact on the number of orders we get from the US. It also pushes up the typical order value somewhat as well – people will turn a £30 order into a £50 order just so they can save on the shipping costs."

So, after such an improvement in fortunes in the past year or two, do Keith and Lauren have any plans in the future to take a rest? Unsurprisingly, the answer is a conclusive 'no'. "We've only just started. We have plans that will take us years to even bring to fruition." The future, it would appear, is left-handed.

Site stats

Anything Left-Handed
www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk

■ Who designed it?
In-house

■ Software used?
Actinic, DreamWeaver

■ Time taken?
Four months

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Your Business Online Q&A

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Problematic providers

Q I am a one-man business and I need email as my main point of communication with customers – day or night. Having had problems with a couple of service providers, can you advise me on which ISP is best for one-off monthly payments for permanent Internet access?

Geoff Flattery

A **With dozens of ISPs offering unmetered access to the Internet, it is difficult to sort the good from the bad. Prices vary considerably – from less than £10 to over £100 per month.**

First of all, it's worth defining what you do and do not require. Since a reliable email service is your priority, you may want to avoid those packages that bundle in large amounts of Web space. The fact that not all services provide true 24-hour cover may also influence your choice and you may feel more comfortable using a service aimed at business users (although this is likely to be much more expensive). Finally, you need to decide how much support you require, since some charge local rates while others involve premium rate phone calls.

Guides such as the one included in the back of this magazine (page 146) summarise the options (including broadband solutions) and you may ask business colleagues for their experiences. But, in such a fast-changing and competitive market, the best choice today may not still be the best tomorrow.

Pain in the domain

Q Having failed to find a sensible domain name amongst the conventional **.com** and **.co.uk** options, I am looking at the new **.biz** option. Is this likely to be a safe choice or is it all hype?

Alice Michaels

A **With a reported 28 million .com domain names registered, it is not surprising that the choices are now somewhat limited and esoteric. The .biz top-level domain was launched in November in an attempt to help firms show from their Web site address that they are in business. So, assuming you are running a small business, then this could make a logical choice.**

Even though the domain was launched only a few months ago, it is proving popular and attracted more than half a million registrations in the first month. Unfortunately, there is still no guarantee that you will get the domain you want and the ownership of some domains is pending a court decision about the way they are allocated.

In my opinion, the .biz domain is one additional factor that can help a small firm demonstrate it is serious about being in business. One other small, but important, factor is that .biz domains are maintained when they are due for renewal – minimising the risk of someone pinching your domain if you forget to send in your cheque.

Cost cutter

Q Running a Web-based business seems like a great opportunity to dump some of the normal costs with running a bricks-and-mortar business. Is this really possible or is the 'virtual business' just a nice concept?

Alun Evans

A **My experience of running a Web-based business for two years is that it is possible to avoid many of the costs you would run into with a bricks-and-mortar shop. In fact, I would even say that survival 'on the Web' now depends on your ability to shave costs to the absolute minimum.**

The obvious starting point is the bricks-and-mortar itself. Serviced offices and call answering services provide considerable flexibility but maintain the right image and professionalism. These days, people are more likely to be impressed by your quality of service than by a designer boardroom. Check out www.instantoffices.co.uk and www.messagelink.co.uk for a few ideas.

Employing staff is a major cost and substantial risk. Outsourcing may appear to be more costly per hour, but some skills and expertise are only needed periodically or at a certain stage of the business. There are thousands of freelance workers out there, as you will discover on www.smarterwork.co.uk. It is easy to outsource site development, Web hosting, PR and the finance department. We even outsource the managing director. I know that, because it's me...

Gerard's sites

A SELECTION OF ONLINE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU PLAN AND MAINTAIN YOUR BUSINESS

Instant Offices

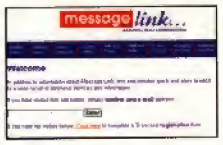
www.instantoffices.co.uk

Push the aesthetic qualities of business to the backburner for a while and concentrate instead on making your quality of service as high as you can. Instant Offices is a good place to begin.

Message Link

www.messagelink.co.uk

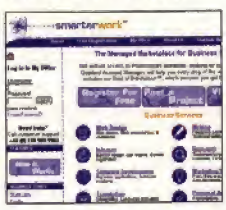
Before setting up a business online, make sure you read through the advice provided by the Message Link site, which has plenty of information and tips on a range of business concerns.



Smarter Work

www.smarterwork.co.uk

If you're looking to outsource any part of your business, pay a visit to the Smarter Worker site. You'll find a plethora of freelance workers covering areas such as Web design, software development and many more.



Hot property

ON THE INTERNET, LOCATION COUNTS. JO CHIPCHASE REVEALS THE PERFECT STRATEGY FOR YOUR MOST VALUABLE PIECE OF ONLINE 'REAL ESTATE' – YOUR DOMAIN NAME

The recent shambles over the registration of new **.biz** domains demonstrates that even the big boys can get it wrong. NeuLevel (**www.neulevel.biz**), the company set up to administer **.biz**, has been accused of running a chaotic system for the countless companies who've been trying to match their domain names to its trading names. This has left the would-be registrants of some 39,000 names in confusion about what's happening and whether their registrations will be successful.

The **.biz** domain was introduced in November last year as the 'exciting' and long-awaited solution to the overcrowding among existing high-level names ending in **.com**, **.net** and **.org**. Its own publicity describes it as "the first advance in Internet addressing in over 15 years" and the "only global top-level domain (gTLD) 'built for business'". Some even heralded it as the successor to **.com**.

Instead, its launch was lacklustre and the domain will continue to lack credibility as long as many of the world's major brands and businesses find themselves unable to use the **.biz** versions of their names. At the same time, many smaller businesses worry whether they might face protracted and costly legal battles to use names they regard as their right – a prospect the **.biz** system was supposed to overcome. What was heralded as a saviour for online business has so far been little more than another source of headaches.

Real estate online

If you run a serious online business, you should pay domain name strategy the heed it deserves, as it's a major part of your identity and branding. A memorable domain can be as important as your company name and trademark. For the lucky few, it can also be a valuable piece of Internet real estate and may sell for more than the original purchase price.

Ideally, your domain name(s) should communicate the nature of your business and

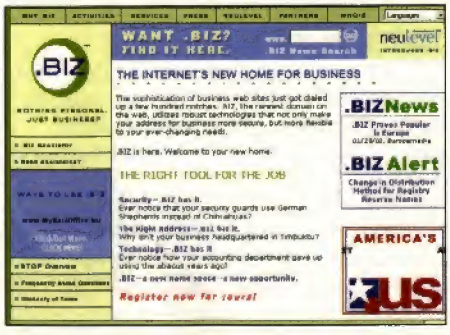
be succinct and easy to remember. Avoid unnecessary hyphens and words that are tricky to spell. The likes of 'philanthropic-manoeuvres.com' could cause confusion.

Generic words – such as 'books.com', 'sex.com' and 'mp3.com' – are desirable, as people tend to look them up without much prompting. Unfortunately, most worthwhile generic names were snapped up like hot gateaux a few years ago, and you're unlikely to have much luck finding them in the **.com** domain arena. Indeed, it's been reported that there are no combinations of three letters and very few combinations of four letters on sale there any more. So, when a new 'top level' domain is introduced – such as the recent – **.biz**, **.info** and **.name** – it doesn't take long for prospectors and big players to take the generic words out of circulation.

Choose a name

To protect your trading identity worldwide, you should register your company name and brand names – along with any obvious misspellings of these – in all the top level domains – **.com**, **.net**, **.org**, **.biz** and, if you're running a public information site, **.info**. The same applies if you're setting up a new online venture. You don't want to register 'mygreatname.biz', only to have a rival venture register 'mygreatname.com' and take a share of your potential audience.

Top level domains aren't the only thing you need to consider, as each nation has its own country level register, too. For example, the **.uk** register encompasses **.co.uk**, **.org.uk**, **.ltd.uk** and the recently introduced **.me.uk** for individuals. Some foreign country level domains may be beneficial for your business, and not just because you trade there. For example, broadcasting companies might want to invest in a Tuvalu domain to obtain the **.tv** suffix. Meanwhile, the Italian domain register provides snappy little numbers such as 'find.it' and 'advertise.it'. Be aware that some countries, such as France, Spain and Greece, won't allow you to register a domain name unless you actually live or trade there.



Unfortunately, Neulevel didn't get off to an auspicious start with the new .biz domain

Afilias is in charge of running the .info top level domain, which was introduced last year

> **"THERE ARE NO COMBINATIONS OF THREE LETTERS AND VERY FEW OF FOUR ON SALE ANY MORE"**

Who owns domain names?

The domain industry is a large and complex beast. Two main types of organisation are involved in the administration process: registries, which look after the databases that hold all the details concerning domains, and registrars, who sell the domains to ISPs and Joe Punter.

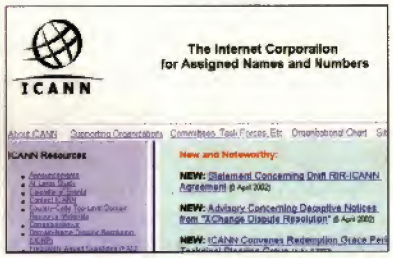
UK domains are administered by Nominet (**www.nominet.org.uk**). Nominet sells domain names directly to customers for a rather steep £80 + VAT, and through its network of 'tag-holders'. You can become a Nominet member and tag-holder, and buy names at just £5 + VAT a go, if you're willing to pay a £400 joining fee plus £100 annual membership. But, clearly, this is only worthwhile if you're planning to buy a large number of names. For the average customer, the best bet is to buy **.uk** domains from established resellers, such as UK Domains (**www.ukdomains.com**), Virtual Internet (**www.vi.com**) and Net Benefit (**www.netbenefit.co.uk**). If you shop around, you can find prices of £15-20 per name for two years.

While the new **.info** register is run by a company called Afilias (**www.afilias.org**), the largest registry for **.com**, **.net** and **.org** domains is probably Network Solutions (**www.netsol.com**), owned by online security company, VeriSign (**www.verisign.com**). NetSol lost its previous monopoly during 1999, when the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN at **www.icann.org**), in consultation with the US Government, decided to introduce some healthy competition by allowing alternative top level registries, such as CORE (**www.corenic.org**) to set up shop.

Since then, the price of top level domains has fallen significantly. NetSol/VeriSign still charges

Global misery

WHEN HUSBAND AND wife team Concepcio Riera and Joan Nogueras registered Barcelona.com for their information portal, they thought everything was fine. After all, Amazon.com and other geographically-named sites were thriving, and the names of Spanish cities can't be trademarked under Spanish law.



ICANN' (www.icann.com) is the technical co-ordination body responsible for domain names globally

However, the Barcelona city government had different ideas, and invoked ICANN's Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) to demand the name. During August 2000, an arbitrator for the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) ruled that the city's claim bested the Riera's. The Rieras then filed an appeal in the US courts, which ended in the decision being upheld. The court ordered that Barcelona.com be transferred to the Barcelona government immediately. It ruled that the Riera's had attempted to profit by waylaying people who would expect to find an official government site.

Dan Evans of the venture, renamed Easybarcelona.com, comments: "I understood that dispute processes were there to protect trademarks. In our case, though, neither party holds a trademark 'barcelona' – neither US nor Spanish law permits this. However, the City Council did apply for, and win, the trademark 'barcelona.com' – before the original WIPO decision. It seems money and size are what is important, and not intentions."

The Riera's Spanish Barcelona.com city portal became Easybarcelona.com when the city council demanded the name and won under the UDRP. The ruling could affect other geographic domain holders

Domain strategy

Anyone who is in the market for a .uk address will have to deal with Nominet – it's currently responsible for all .uk domains

$70 (approx. £49) for two year registrations, which is on the expensive side, so it pays to trawl for bargains elsewhere. German registrar, Joker (**www.joker.com**) charges just 24 Euro (approx. £15) for a two year registration of .com, .net and .org domains and Euro 22 and Euro 23 for **.biz** and **.info** domains. However, these prices only buy you the names themselves, not the facility to use the name for email or Web hosting.

Your registrar

When choosing a registrar, go for one that offers a reasonable price and an efficient service. Expect to pay the foreign currency equivalent of £20 or less if you're registering the name yourself or up to £80 if the registrar is doing everything for you. Check whether there are hidden charges for moving a domain, selling it, or amending your registration details. With **.uk** names, read the small print before you part with any cash. Some registrars sell them or even give them away as a loss-leader to tie you in for further business. Some may charge a premium for Web and mail forwarding, while others penalise you for moving your domain elsewhere. You should research whether the registrar is efficient at domain transfers. In an attempt to keep customers on board, some registrars can be obstructively slow at the necessary admin.

Never trust a registrar who tries to charge you a 'pre-registration fee' to bid for names on a new domain register (this happened with **.info** and **.biz**). Your money is probably going into the registrar's pocket, rather than to the registry, and you'll lose out if your bid fails.

Own up

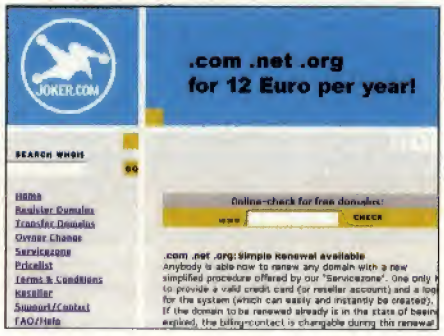
Make sure you're named as the owner or registrant on the domain record and check that the technical and admin contact details are correct. If you want to change the 'owner-contact' details later, you may be obliged to fill in forms and pay a fee. Network Solutions insists that you and the previous owner have your signatures witnessed by a Notary Public, which is a pain. If a third party registers a domain on your behalf, and you're not named as the owner/registrant contact, you might not know when it's due for renewal or you may even get into a dispute about ownership.

"NEVER TRUST A REGISTRAR WHO TRIES TO CHARGE YOU A 'PRE-REGISTRATION FEE JUST TO BID"

Financial advice site Motley Fool (**www.motleyfool.co.uk**) recently had egg on its face when it forgot to renew its domain name. The name was suspended by Nominet, making it inaccessible for a while. At best, this sort of thing will make you look unprofessional. At worst, someone else will snap up your name.

Be aware of property rights

If you're an established venture and someone registers your trademarked name (or vice versa), you do have a method of comeback. As a rule, it's wise to avoid infringing intellectual property rights if you want to steer clear of litigation. In particular, don't register the name of an existing company with the intention of selling it to them at an inflated price. In a landmark case, a domain name speculator tried to sell worldwidewrestlingfederation.com to the WWF for a few thousand pounds. In the first legal link between trademark and domain name, the WWF sued him for trademark infringement and won. To safeguard yourself, make sure you're entitled to the name you're registering. If you don't take sufficient care, you could find yourself in the midst of a Uniform Dispute Resolution Policy (UDRP) case. UDRP is a set of quasi-judicial rules introduced by ICANN to decide who should own a contested domain name. It's been widely slated for its controversial rulings, the tendency for corporates to win cases, and because 'defendants' must prove their innocence, which is an unusual twist on the law.



It's no joke. German registrar, Joker, sells top level domains at a reasonable price

Get it right

The domain name market is constantly moving and changing. Keeping abreast of the available options, maintaining your existing domains (don't forget to renew them before they expire) and finding reliable registrars are important. If you're a major venture that needs to protect your trading name worldwide, consider using a professional domain consultancy service, such as Net Searchers (**www.netsearchers.com**). For smaller ventures, it's a case of remaining on the ball and not neglecting your most valuable online asset – your domain name.

Transfer a domain name

THE PROCESS OF transferring domains from host to host (or ISP) varies, depending on the type of domain and the efficiency of the hosts. Some require written authorisation on headed paper, some ask for instructions by email or fax, while others simply let you make changes online. The general rule is to ensure that your outgoing host knows the information about your incoming host. For **.uk** domains, they only need to know the incoming host's tag. For other domains, they may need more information, such as DNS addresses and contacts for admin, technical and billing purposes. Look to your incoming host for advice.

It generally takes between 24 hours and a few days for your domain to be transferred but complications can occasionally occur. Most hosts transfer names in for free but many charge for transferring names away.

Domain name value

PREMIUM DOMAIN NAMES – such as snappy, generic words – are the online equivalent of a mansion in Belgravia. The most desirable names (and some unexpected ones) sell for high prices on auction sites such as Great Domains (**www.greatdomains.com**). Perhaps your business is sitting on a gold mine? For a touch of inspiration, some of the most expensive domains in history have been:

Business.com – $7.5 million
ASeenOnTv.com – $5.1 million
AltaVista.com – $3.3 million
Loans.com – $3 million
Wine.com – $2.9 million
Autos.com – $2.2 million
Express.com – $1.8 million
WallStreet.com – $1 million

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In brief:
Task: Creating an online eCommerce store in simple steps
Software I need: Microshop Online
Difficulty: Beginner
Time I need: 1 hour

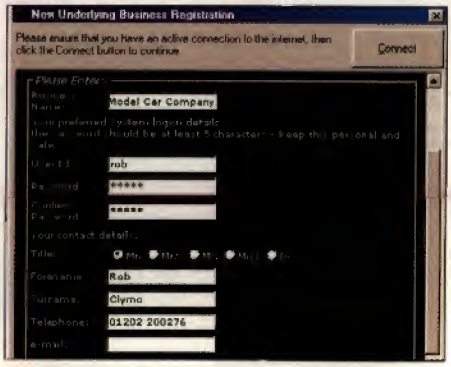
Build your first eCommerce site with Microshop

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS EFFECTIVE SOLUTION TO PUTTING A BUSINESS ONLINE

ONE OF THE most common misconceptions about building an eCommerce site is that it will be difficult. While this is certainly true when using some so-called user-friendly online shop creation software packages, Microshop Online is just the opposite. In fact, thanks to the natty wizards that lurk inside this new program, it's possible to get an eCommerce site up and running in no time at all.

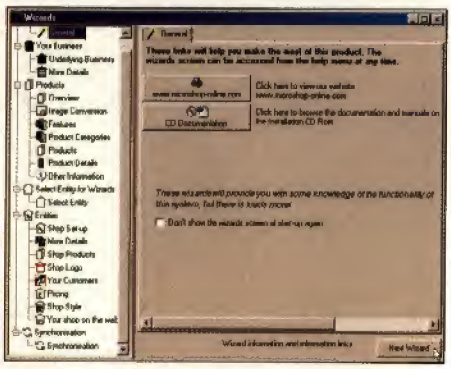
Microshop Online comes in two versions; the standard starting kit for small and medium-sized businesses or a professional version that offers everything for running a big-time operation. The pair retail for £149.99 and £249.99 respectively and can be bought from Amazon.

For such a competitively priced package, the software isn't short on features, either. Even the cheaper option allows you to create a complete site, receive and process online sales and offers a variety of different design styles. Installation is a doddle and the entire site hosting malarkey is handled by B2B systems who also offer comprehensive technical support. Ultimately, there is everything here to enable you to create an instant online presence, which not only works well but looks great, too.



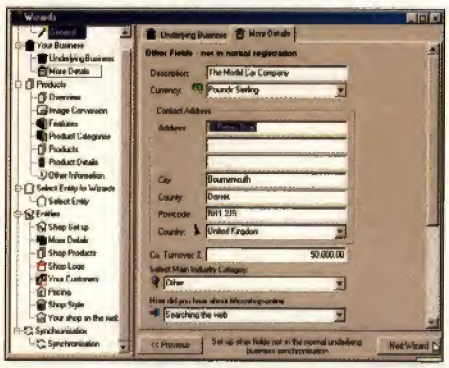
1 Installation procedure

Start by installing the program from its CD. Now launch it and follow the registration process. You will need to be connected to the Internet for this to succeed. Once this has been done you will be ready to start building your shop.



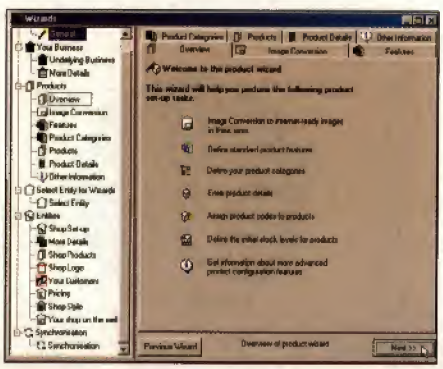
2 The Wizards

After registration, you can start building using the Wizards. The left-hand window shows the various component areas of the store, which are accessed by clicking on them. When you're ready, press the 'Next' button to go to the next Wizard.



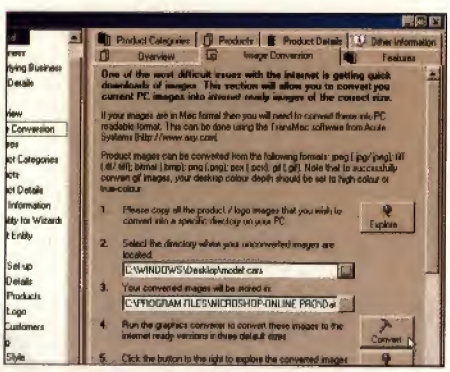
3 Add extra details

The next form requires you to add other information that assists with the administration of your store. You'll also be able to state the currency to trade in, although note that the basic version only allows you to select the 'GBP' option.



4 Select your products

The various tabs in this window enable you to work on any element of your shop. The Wizard here also introduces you to the Graphics Converter tool. This enables you to convert your existing images into Internet-ready ones.



5 Convert your images

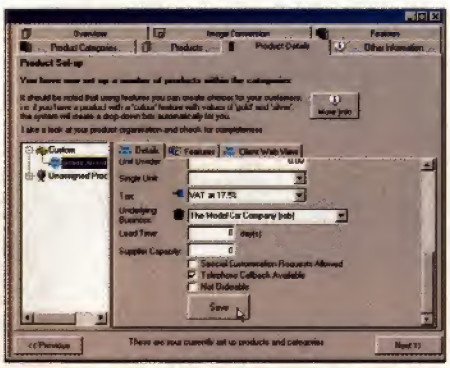
Click the 'Windows Explore' button and set up a directory with all of your site images. Select this directory to see where your converted images will be stored, which will depend on the software you are using.

6 Product categories

Prior to setting up your products you will also need to set up your categories. This allows people to navigate directly to the part of your store they're interested in. You can also select the sort of images people will see when they get to the site.

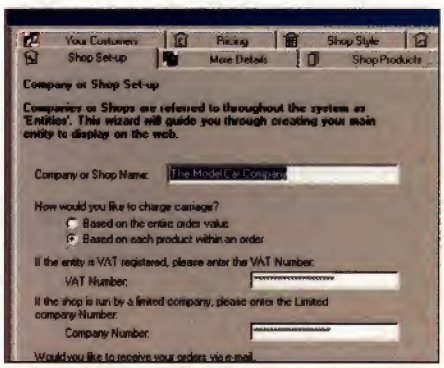
7 Add new products

Once you've done that, you're ready to start adding your products. Click the 'Add New Product' button. You can specify things like price and also select the picture that you want to show in the window. Check the results by pressing 'Preview'.



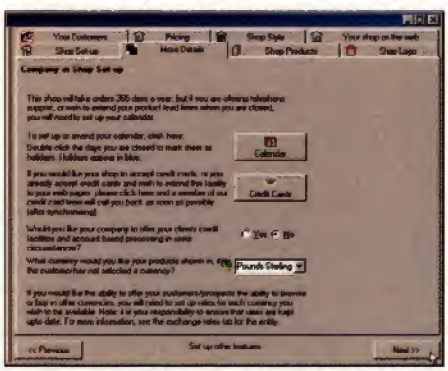
8 Save your changes

When your products look okay, you can save the product in question. It is never too late to go back and change anything you're not happy with. This is the beauty of using Microshop; any of the details can be changed at any point.



9 The shop setup

Your shop and the way it is set up is called an Entity. The Shop Setup window allows you to decide what your store will end up looking like. Add crucial details like VAT numbers and official registration numbers if you're a Limited Company.



10 Even more details

Now specify the other information that is vital to making an online business work. Click the 'Next' button and proceed to the 'More Details' tab. Use this to define your 'working calendar' and whether or not to accept credit card payments.

11 Adjust the calendar

Your new shop can take and process orders 365 days a year. Clicking on the 'Calendar' tab enables you to specify exactly when your shop is open, for example whether you trade at weekends or on holidays.

Jargon buster

Web hosting

This is the term used for describing the company that provides a home for your eCommerce store once you have built it and uploaded it to the Web. In the case of Microshop Online, your site is hosted by B2B Systems who offer everything you need to keep your business ticking over on a day-to-day basis. It also provides technical support should you get bogged down anywhere along the line.

Root folder

This is a common term in the world of Web design. The root folder is the place where you keep everything that is relevant to your Web site. By doing this you minimise the risk of errors happening within your Web pages, and there is a central folder for all of the elements, including HTML pages and all of the images used within them. It also means that you can manage your files much more easily, rather than having bits and pieces scattered all over your PC.

Entities

A fancy term for something that is actually a great deal simpler than it sounds. This is basically another phrase for describing your virtual shop front or eCommerce store. This is how your customers will view your products over the Web. Prior to creating this, you will need to set up all of the various options so that your Web site is tailor made to suit your individual needs. This is made that much easier thanks to the help of some of the built-in Wizards within the program.

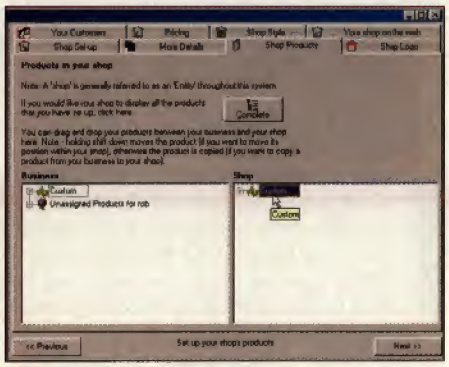
Tip!

Style it up!

The great thing about Microshop Online is the ability to customise your eCommerce site so that it looks just how you want it to. It can also follow the same colour theme as your company stationery if you already have a traditional business in operation. The Styling option allows you to tweak the appearance of your store, using either the Wizard feature that offers limited choices, or adjusting the look and feel of your pages via the manual selections on offer.

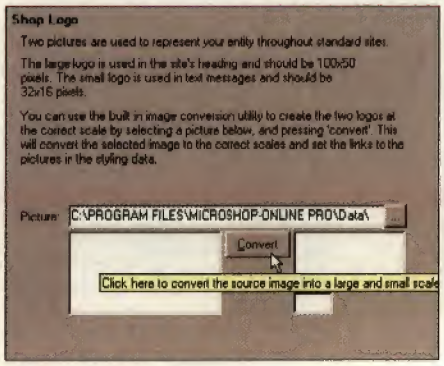
Your business online

Build a store



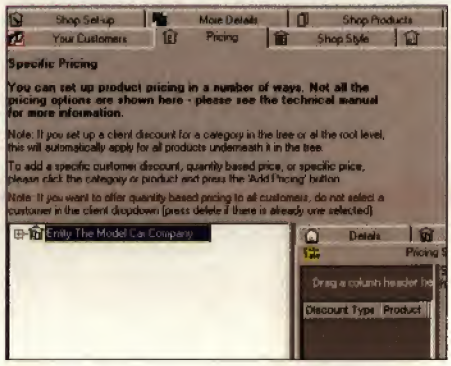
12 Shop Products

This window lets you transfer all of the products you have set up so far to your Entity or shop front. Your products are shown in the left-hand side of the window, while your Entity products sit in the right-hand window.



13 Add a logo

It's important that your new store has a strong identity so use the Shop Logo tab to select a logo. This can be easily designed in an image-editing program, and then saved as a GIF, or the program can do it for you.



14 Price your products

It's important to ensure all of your pricing details are clear. Go to the 'Pricing' tab and a form appears in the right-hand side of the screen. This is where you select and apply details of your pricing structure.

15 A touch of style

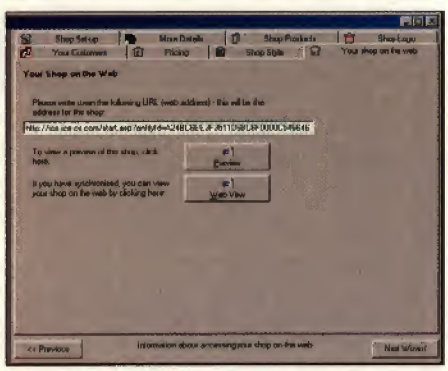
The Shop Style tab allows you to create a unique looking store in just a few simple steps. There are many variations on this. Simply click on the 'Shop Style' tab and you will be presented with a host of tools for customising your pages.

16 A splash of colour

Every aspect of the store's look and feel can be tailored to look how you want it. You can specify things like Backgrounds, Fonts, Logos, Menus and how the text will appear. Colours can be selected by checking any of the colour boxes.

17 Edit your fonts

For an extra touch of class, make sure that you select a font that compliments the feel of your site. To edit the font for your elements, highlight it and then click on the 'Browse' button. A font selection screen will appear.

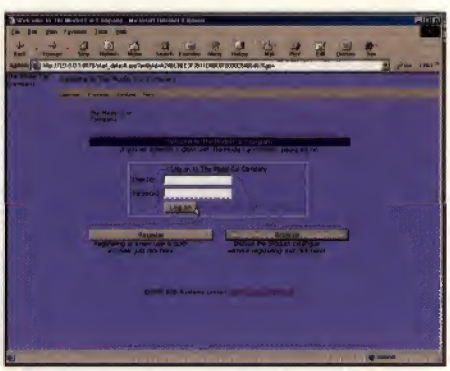


18 Go online

The 'Your shop on the web' tab lets you specify the URL for your shop. This can be mapped to a specific domain name by your ISP or linked to an existing Web site. This will be the main address for your forthcoming online shop.

19 Get synchronised

Now you have set up your catalogue, you will need to synchronise all of the information. A database has been generated from this information, which needs to be published to the live servers.



20 Log on to your site

Once you've synchronised the pages, you are then free to go back and change any aspect of your site by repeating the relevant the steps, fine-tuning, and then simply synchronising the site all over again.

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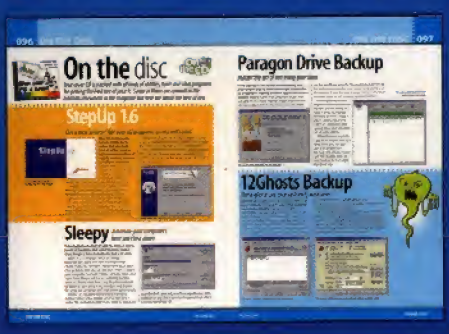

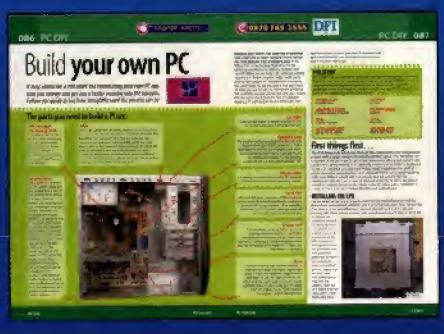

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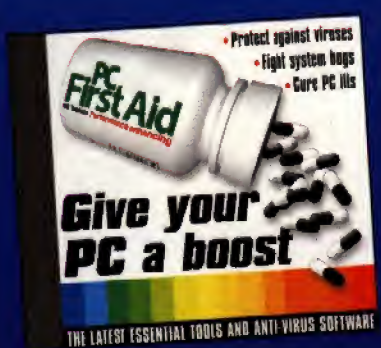

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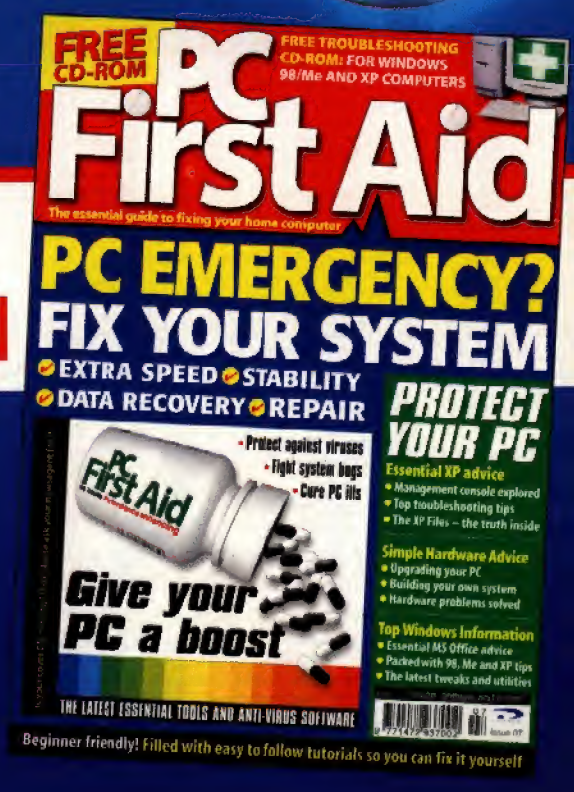

Pick the perfect Web hosting deal

USE THIS AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SELECT THE PERFECT HOME FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ECOMMERCE WEB SITE

SELECTING A WEB hosting company to look after your business is just as tricky as picking the right ISP to connect you to the Internet. There's a baffling array of deals to choose from, each offering slightly different services and each charging slightly different prices. In short, there's no simple answer.

Our aim in compiling this guide is to allow you to see the different types of packages available and help you glean some idea of the costs you're likely to face. While we haven't included every single deal offered by the firms included (we could probably fill the whole of YBO with them) we have listed the products that we think are most relevant to our readers.

To use these listings effectively we recommend using the information below to pick out a handful of firms that cater for your needs. The next step is to contact each directly to discuss your requirements further.

Keeping up-to-date

While we try and ensure that all the information in our listings is up to date, the occasional error does creep through. If you would like to update your current details drop an email to **pi@paragon.co.uk** with the information you would like changed.

NAME	URL	Package	Phone	Cost	Web space	POP3 Accounts	FrontPage Extensions	Phone Support
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Standard	0870 739 2020	£100.00	25Mb	1	Yes	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	PHP	0870 739 2020	£150.00	100Mb	1	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Cold Fusion	0870 739 2020	£250.00	100Mb	1	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Java	0870 739 2020	£300.00	100Mb	1	No	Yes
9NetAvenue	www.9netave.uk.net	9Net ONE Plan	0800 328 9450	£239.40	25Mb	10	No	Yes
Active ISP	www.activeisp.co.uk	Small Business	0870 7304000	£143.40	35Mb	10	Yes	Yes
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	10Mb	08707 449227	£70.00	10Mb	1	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	20Mb	08707 449227	£122.00	20Mb	5	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	50Mb	08707 449227	£190.00	50Mb	5	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	5Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£39.99	5Mb	1	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	10Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£59.99	10Mb	3	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	25Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£99.99	25Mb	5	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	50Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£149.99	50MB	7	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	100Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£199.99	100Mb	10	No	Yes
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	250Mb Web space	020 8399 6675	£349.99	250Mb	15	No	Yes
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	500Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£499.99	500Mb	20	No	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Pro	08707 555565	£99.95	25Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Premier	08707 555565	£199.95	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise	08707 555565	£349.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise NT	08707 555565	£399.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Light	0845 355 1000	£29.99	10Mb	10	No	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Starter	0845 355 1000	£59.99	50Mb	20	Yes	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Soho	0845 355 1000	£99.00	100Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Enterprise	0845 355 1000	£199.00	200Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Professional	0845 355 1000	£399.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Advanced	0845 355 1000	£699.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Compila	www.compila.com	Value	020 8289 3039	£12.00	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compila	www.compila.com	Commercial	020 8289 3039	£48.00	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compila	www.compila.com	Commercial	020 8289 3039	£48.00	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Enterprise Plan	0870 7414151	£89.99	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Commerce Plan	0870 7414151	£179.99	250Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Bargain Host	wwww.bargainhost.co.uk	Budget Host	None	£12.99	35Mb	1	No	No
Bargain Host	wwww.bargainhost.co.uk	Budget Host Pro	None	£22.99	50Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Home User	01452 541260	£60.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Business User	01452 541260	£199.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Value	0845 1170366	£71.40	30Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Classic Unix	0845 1170366	£119.40	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes

Web host listings

NAME	URL	Package	Phone	Cost	Web space	POP3 Accounts	FrontPage Extensions	Phone Support
Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Classic NT	0845 1170366	£119.40	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Ghoulnet Griffin Internet	www.ghoulnet.co.uk www.griffin.net.uk	Business Web Windows 2000 Webspace	0800 0747581 0870 0007100	£69.00 £199	100Mb 150Mb	50 100	Yes Yes	No Yes
Iarna Iarna	www.iarna.co.uk www.iarna.co.uk	Professional Business	0800 1801880 0800 1801880	£89.00 £179.00	200Mb 400Mb	20 40	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Iomart Iomart	www.iomart.com www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 30 NT Core Hosting 50	0870 0500303 0870 0500303	£179.88 £239.88	30Mb 50Mb	10 10	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Iomart Iomart	www.iomart.com www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 75 NT Core Hosting 100	0870 0500303 0870 0500303	£359.88 £1199.88	75Mb 100Mb	10 10	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Joshua Internet Joshua Internet	www.joshuainternet.com www.joshuainternet.com	Starter Standard	None None	£46.41 £92.82	35Mb 80Mb	10 25	Yes Yes	No No
Joshua Internet Magic Moments	www.joshuainternet.com www.magic-moments.com	Professional Magic Home Entry	None 0808 1006200	£185.64 £99.95	200Mb 100Mb	60 1	Yes No	No Yes
Magic Moments Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com www.magic-moments.com	Magic Home Pro Business Professional	0808 1006200 0808 1006200	£199.95 £199	400Mb 100Mb	100 100	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Magic Moments Mailbox	www.magic-moments.com www.mailbox.net.uk	Business eCommerce WebStandard	0808 1006200 0845 177345	£499 £100	100Mb 25Mb	100 0	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Mailbox Mailbox	www.mailbox.net.uk www.mailbox.net.uk	WebGold WebPro	0845 177345 0845 177345	£200 £300	50Mb 25Mb	15 25	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Mailbox Metronet	www.mailbox.net.uk www.metronet.co.uk	WebSecure Toe in the water	0845 177345 020 8426 4446	£250 £49.00	25Mb None	0 None	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Metronet Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk www.metronet.co.uk	Going for a paddle Dive, dive, dive	020 8426 4446 020 8426 4446	£139.00 £287.00	10Mb 10Mb	5 5	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Namehog Namehog	www.namehog.net www.namehog.net	Small Business Business Pro	0870 9059444 0870 9059444	£42.00 £60.00	100Mb 200Mb	20 25	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Netcetera Netcetera	www.inetc.net www.inetc.net	EASYwebs Gold	0800 2987214 0800 2987214	£125.00 £250.00	50Mb 30Mb	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Netcetera Netcetera	www.inetc.net www.inetc.net	Diamond Platinum	0800 2987214 0800 2987214	£450.00 £600.00	50Mb 200Mb	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
NetNation NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk www.netnation.co.uk	Web Wizard Starter	0800 0283639 0800 0283639	£83.40 £131.40	10Mb 20Mb	None 1	No Yes	No No
NetNation NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk www.netnation.co.uk	Pro Power	0800 0283639 0800 0283639	£191.40 £419.40	150Mb 300Mb	20 40	Yes Yes	No No
Netway OrbitalNet	www.netway.co.uk www.orbital.net	Small to medium business Pack 2	07020 939842 0800 3891397	£199.00 £129.00	20Mb 50Mb	1 5	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
OrbitalNet OrbitalNet	www.orbital.net www.orbital.net	Pack 3 Pack 4	0800 3891397 0800 3891397	£249.00 £299.00	50Mb 100Mb	5 10	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
OrbitalNet PMHIS.Net	www.orbital.net www.pmhis.net	Pack 5 Web+	0800 3891397 None	£3.99 £60.00	200Mb Unlimited	20 Unlimited	Yes Yes	Yes No
Positive Internet Company Powas Park	www.positive-internet.com www.powaspark.net	Shared Hosting Valuespace	0800 3161006 0870 7303170	£250.00 £49.99	120Mb 100Mb	Unlimited 50	Yes No	Yes Yes
Powas Park Powas Park	www.powaspark.net www.powaspark.net	Optispace Commercespace	0870 7303170 0870 7303170	£99.99 £199.99	1Gb Unlimited	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Simply Names Simply Names	www.simplynames.co.uk www.simplynames.co.uk	Simply Basic Simply Solo	01684 893020 01684 893020	£49.99 £69.99	10Mb 50Mb	0 1	No Yes	No No
Simply Names Simply Names	www.simplynames.co.uk www.simplynames.co.uk	Simply Enterprise Simply Corporate	01684 893020 01684 893020	£99.99 £149.99	100Mb 200Mb	10 20	Yes Yes	No No
Simply Names Shared Knowledge	www.simplynames.co.uk www.sharedknowledge.net	Simply Foam Entry	01684 893020 01707 885800	£249.99 £99.99	500Mb 40Mb	50 Unlimited	Yes Yes	No No
Shared Knowledge Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net www.sharedknowledge.net	Personal Small Business	01707 885800 01707 885800	£99.99 £249.99	80Mb 200Mb	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	No Yes
Shared Knowledge Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net www.sharedknowledge.net	Net Business Executive	01707 885800 01707 885800	£399.99 £499.99	400Mb 400Mb	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Shared Knowledge Sonnet	www.sharedknowledge.net www.sonnet.co.uk	Executive E-Commerce Solo Lite 24/7	01707 885800 N/A	£799.99 £180	600Mb 25Mb	Unlimited 25	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Sonnet Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk www.sonnet.co.uk	DialfBusiness Solo Daytime	N/A N/A	£120 £180	50Mb 50Mb	25 50	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Sonnet Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo 24/7 Symphony	N/A N/A	£300 £660	50Mb 100Mb	50 50	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Square Internet Square Internet	www.squareinternet.co.uk www.squareinternet.co.uk	Home Value Package Home Value Plus	None None	£13.99 £22.50	35Mb 50Mb	1 Unlimited	No Yes	No No
Square Internet Square Internet	www.squareinternet.co.uk www.squareinternet.co.uk	Business Host Package Business Host Plus Package	None None	£49.99 £99.99	100Mb 250Mb	Unlimited Unlimited	Yes Yes	No No
Strongnet Supanames	www.strongnet.co.uk www.supanames.co.uk	Various Value Host	01703 866006 0870 1257678	Various £13.99	50Mb 35Mb	Unlimited 1	Unlimited No	No Yes
Supanames UK Hosting	www.supanames.co.uk www.ukhosting.co.uk	Value Host Pro 5 megs	0870 1257678 0845 082 0696	£23.99 £55.00	35Mb 20Mb	Unlimited 1	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
UK Hosting UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk www.ukhosting.co.uk	10 megs 20 megs	0845 082 0696 0845 082 0696	£95.00 £125.00	20Mb 20Mb	1 1	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Verio Verio	www.verio.co.uk www.verio.co.uk	Starter Designer	020 7767 3700 020 7767 3700	£109.45 £197.45	10Mb 50Mb	2 20	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Verio Verio	www.verio.co.uk www.verio.co.uk	Business Commerce	020 7767 3700 020 7767 3700	£274.45 £384.45	125Mb 175Mb	40 60	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Web Fusion Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk www.webfusion.co.uk	Web Fusion Business Pro Business E-Commerce	0115 9170000 0115 9170000	£199.00 £499.00	100Mb 100Mb	100 100	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Web Tapestry Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.com www.webtapestry.com	Basic Hosting Economy Hosting	0800 0151718 0800 0151718	£35.00 £50.00	10Mb 25Mb	1 2	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Web Tapestry Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.com www.webtapestry.com	Senior Hostings Executive Hostings	0800 0151718 0800 0151718	£125.00 £200.00	50Mb 100Mb	5 10	Yes Yes	Yes Yes
Xsession Xsession	www.xsession.com www.xsession.com	Personal Hosting Business Hosting	01784 460896 01784 460896	£39.00 £94.00	25Mb 200Mb	20 100	Yes Yes	No No
Xsession Zebra Hosts.net	www.xsession.com ww.zebrahosts.net	Premium Hosting Package 1	01784 460896 0845 4584200	£350.00 £50.00	500Mb 5Mb	350 0	Yes No	No No
Zebra Hosts.net Zebra Hosts.net	ww.zebrahosts.net ww.zebrahosts.net	Package 2 Package 3	0845 4584200 0845 4584200	£100.00 £175.00	25Mb 50Mb	0 1	No Yes	No Yes
Zebra Hosts.net	ww.zebrahosts.net	Package 4	0845 4584200	£500.00	100Mb	5	Yes	Yes

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Q&A

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The CoffeeCup WebCam software is inexpensive and easy to use

Web camaraderie

Q Please can you help? I've been a subscriber to *Practical Internet* for several years and I've been waiting for an article to arrive on how to set up and use a Web cam. I bought one from PC World about a year ago and have not yet been able to use it on the Net. If your magazine has done a report or tutorial and I've missed it, please forgive me. Just let me know the issue number, I'm sure to still have it. Thanks for a great magazine.

Rick

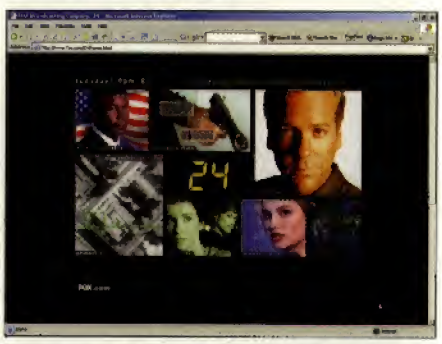
A **If you have issue 60, have a look at page 74 – there's a Web cam tutorial there. When you buy a Web cam it should come with the driver software on CD-ROM and instructions on how to set it up. If you don't have these details, you should be able to look up your specific model of Web cam on the support page of the manufacturer's Web site and download instructions and driver software from there. You haven't said what make the Web cam is, so it's difficult to be more specific. Windows XP and – to a lesser extent – Windows ME and Windows 2000 should be able to find drivers for the Web cam on the Internet. Connect to the Internet, plug in the Web cam and the Add New Hardware wizard should start. Follow the on-screen instructions and it should be able to find drivers for the Web cam on the Net. Finally, if you do find drivers for your Web cam, you should try the CoffeeCup WebCam 3.5 software to set up the Web cam on your Web site. You can find details at www.coffeecup.com/webcam and it only costs $30, that's about £22.**

Are you experienced?

Q I have a Dell PIII computer running Windows 98SE including Internet Explorer 5 and Outlook Express 5. Because I do a lot of Web surfing I would like to upgrade my system to Internet Explorer 6. Your warning notice states that only experienced users should attempt this installation, please let me know where I can find the required information so that I can perform this task myself, I know a bit about computers.

Martin D

A **Although most people will be able to do a straightforward installation, on rare occasions it can cause problems. This is why we've included a warning. You will probably be able to install the browser without problems, especially if you know a fair bit about computers.**



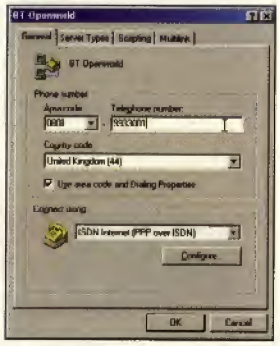
Installing Internet Explorer 6 is usually a straightforward affair

Disappearing number

Q I'm using Windows 98 on my laptop to connect to my Internet service provider – Freenetname. Everything is fine except for one small problem; I have to keep typing the phone number in to the connection box every time I want to go online because a different one appears. This is getting very annoying, how do I fix this?

Sally Smith

A **I think that the correct number for your Internet service provider has not been entered into the Dial-Up Networking preferences. Go to the 'My Computer' icon on the Windows 98 desktop and double-click on it. When the My Computer window opens, double-click the 'Dial-Up Networking' folder. In here you will find a Dial-Up Networking connection icon called Freenetname. Right-click upon this icon and select the 'Properties' command in the pop-up menu. When the Properties control panel opens you will see that the wrong number has been stored. Enter the correct number for Freenetname and then click the 'OK' button to save the settings. The next time you attempt to connect to the Net with Freenetname, the correct dial-up number will now be stored in the settings.**



If the wrong phone number is stored in Dial-Up Networking, you will have to change it each time you connect to the Net

Virus attack

Q I use the Internet quite a lot and a friend of mine alerted me to the fact that I had sent him an attachment containing an email virus. He has suggested that I install Norton Internet Security 2002 to clear the virus from my system and protect me from getting new viruses. I installed it but I now have a really big problem. After installation the program found three different viruses on my computer. I followed the advice and two were repaired and I quarantined the other virus. Now every time I boot up I get a message saying 'Windows can not find SirC32.exe' and when I try to run any program I get a message saying 'This program is not a valid win32 application.' What can I do to fix this? I am using a Pentium II 266 running Windows 98.

Greg Roberts

A **The W32.Sircam.Worm has infected your PC and the problem is occurring because the file that has been quarantined is a file used by Windows when it runs programs. Norton Internet Security 2002 can not fix the problem itself, but there is a fix you can download from the Symantec Web site that will sort it out. Of course, you can't actually connect to the Internet to download the fix because the problem is preventing you from running any applications on your PC. What you will have to do is download the program that can fix your problem using a different PC and save it onto floppy disk –**

Top tip!

Ask Jeeves Clickbar

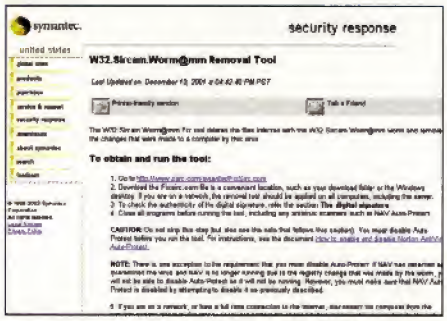
I've recently started using the Ask Jeeves Clickbar – and I love it. The clickbar sits at the top of your browser window and lets you perform an Ask Jeeves search from whatever site you're visiting.

Christopher Black

You can download the clickbar from www.ask.co.uk

perhaps your friend who warned you about the viruses can help you out with this. It's only a small program under 200K in size so it will fit on a floppy. First, though, you have to put the SirC32.exe file back into your Windows folder or the problem can't be fixed.

Go to the 'Start' menu and select 'Programs', 'Windows Explorer'. Use the left-hand pane to navigate to the following location: 'Program Files', 'Norton Antivirus', 'Quarantine', 'Incoming'. Inside this folder you should find a file called something like PO1.EXE. Change the name of this file to SirC32.exe using the same spelling and upper and lower case letters that I have used here. Now drag this file to the Windows folder on drive C.



The Symantec Web site contains complete details of how you should get rid of the W32.Sircam.Worm on your system

On your friends' computer, go to the following Web page: **www.symantec.com/avcenter/venc/data/w32.sircam.worm@mm.removal.tool.html.** You must download the file called FixSirc.com and save it to a floppy disk. You should also print out this Web page because it contains full details of how you get rid of the worm virus. Take the floppy to your PC and boot up as usual. Insert the floppy disk and copy the FixSirc.com program to the Windows 98 desktop. After you have copied the program, eject the floppy disk and double-click on the 'FixSirc.com' icon on the desktop to run the program. It will now scan your entire hard drive(s) and fix the problem. When it has finished, reboot your PC and you can now run your programs again.

Finally, don't forget to use the LiveUpdate feature of Norton Internet Security 2002 to

ISPs for Windows XP

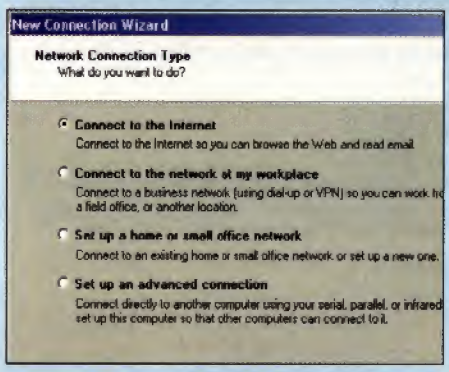
Q My friend recently bought a PC with Windows XP ready installed upon it. He has tried to get online using the CD-ROMs from several free ISPs but he says that none of them will operate under Windows XP. How can he get online with a free Internet service provider?

David Beacham

A **The problem with ISP CD-ROMs is that they try to install IE5 or IE5.5 on your PC. Windows XP already comes with IE6, so the installation fails. To solve this, register for something like a Freeserve account online while connected to the Net using your PC. Note that you should not automatically install the settings. Instead, print out the settings for your friend's account and then manually set up Dial-Up Networking and other account details on his PC. We're using Freeserve as our example ISP.**

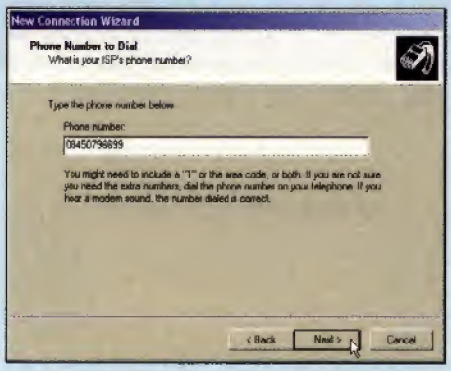
1 Print the account details

After going through the account set up process, print out the account details. This gives the settings for you to set up the Dial-Up Networking connection and set up email and so on. Remember; DO NOT automatically install the settings.



2 Now go home

In Windows XP, go to the 'Start' button and select 'Setting', 'Network Connections'. Right-click 'Network Connections' and select 'Open'. Click the 'Create a new connection' button. In the wizard, click 'Next' then select 'Connect to the Internet'.

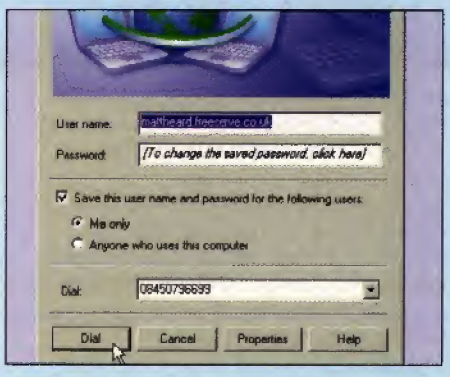


3 New Connection Wizard

On the next pane of the wizard, select the 'Set up my Internet connection manually' option and go to the next page. Now enter the dial-up phone number on your Freeserve printout in the Phone number box and click the 'Next' button.

4 Passwords

Now enter your Freeserve account information. Enter your username and password into the boxes. Select the 'Make this the default Internet connection' box and turn on the Firewall if you wish.



5 Finish and connect

On the next page of the wizard, click the 'Finish' button. You'll see the Freeserve connection box with all of your details. Click the 'Dial' button to go online. Use the other details on the printout to set up Outlook Express for your Internet email.

→ **get the latest virus protection updates from Symantec to make sure that your PC is completely protected.**

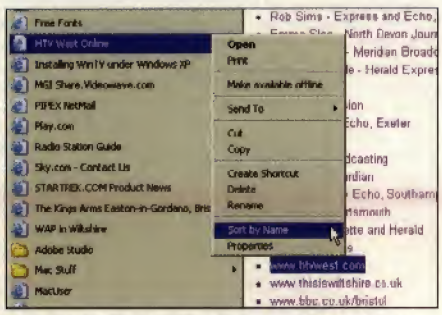
Clean up

Q Have you any recommendations for freeware that cleans up and deletes my Internet cache, gets rid of unwanted files et cetera? I use a battered Windows 95 PC and Internet Explorer 5.5. Thanks.

I Morris

A **I haven't been able to locate any freeware that does as good a job as these shareware programs available from the Tucows Web site. Try the Cache, Cookie & Windows Cleaner 6.6 program that costs $20 from www.tucows.com/system/preview/195704.html or SuperCleaner 2.2 from www.tucows.com/system/preview/195709.html that costs just $25. They are both excellent programs and do exactly what you want. If you are not too sure about buying you can try both of them for free for 30 days.**

SuperCleaner scans your computer for unneeded files and then shows you their name, location, type and size so you can choose which files to delete



You can sort Favorites easily with Internet Explorer 6, but you still can't do so from the Favorites Explorer bar on the left

Sorting Favorites

Q With reference to the enquiry from Mr Richard Kimble concerning Internet Explorer 6 and the inability to sort Favorites by name. I think I must have a different version of Internet Explorer 6 from yourself and Mr Kimble as I can right-click on my column of Favorites and lo and behold – the 'Sort by name' option is there. So I am therefore quite confused. Is there something wrong with my version of Internet Explorer 6 or with yours? Many thanks though for an excellent magazine, I now buy it every month.

John Day

A **I've done a little playing around with Internet Explorer 6 on my Windows 98, Windows 2000 and Windows XP systems and I am unable to sort the Favorites from within the Favorites Explorer bar of Internet Explorer 6. But, I have discovered that you can sort the Favorites list by selecting an item from the drop down list in the Favorites menu and right-clicking on it. This also works from the Favorites menu in any standard window or from the Favorites menu of Windows Explorer. But I'm still sure that you can't sort the list in the Favorites Explorer bar on the left of the Internet Explorer 6 window or from within the Organise Favorites control panel.**

Crashing browser

Q I have both a desktop PC and a laptop and experience the same problem on both machines. Whenever I install and try to use Internet Explorer 6, it crashes and freezes my PCs. I have been in touch with Microsoft support concerning my problem; they in turn referred me to Dell support. Dell tech info told me to carry out a diagnostic check for possible hardware faults – hardly likely on both machines at the same time. Anyway, I carried out diagnostic checks, virus scans, defragged the drives, reverted to Internet Explorer 5.5 and tried the repair tool. No joy. Now Dell refers me to Microsoft support and Microsoft refers me to Dell support, so I'm stuck. I use Windows 98 on both PCs, can you help?

Archie

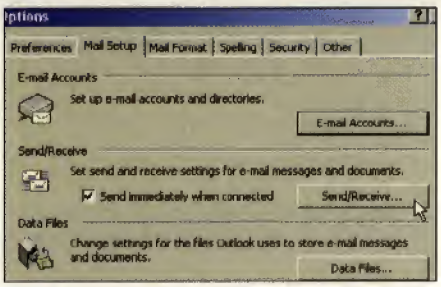
A **I'm assuming that you have more than 16Mb of memory on your PCs, which is the minimum requirement for Internet Explorer 6 to run. I have noted that you are using Windows 98 as your operating system. After a search through the Web I have discovered that Internet Explorer 6 freezing on Windows 98 PCs is quite common although I have – as yet – been unable to find a solution even on the Microsoft Support Knowledge Base. One thing you can try is to use Windows Update in Internet Explorer 5.5 and make sure that your version of Windows 98 is fully up-to-date. If anyone knows why this happens with Internet Explorer 6 and Windows 98 please drop us a line. I will come back to this problem in *Practical Internet* 68.**

What a load of junk

Q I'm getting rather a lot of junk mail dropping into my email account. I really don't need invitations to visit porn sites, enhance my manhood or take part in one of the many money making offers I get. I really need to keep my current email address, though. I use Outlook 2002 as part of Office XP which has junk mail filters, but I'd rather not download the messages from the server at all. Is this possible with Outlook 2002?

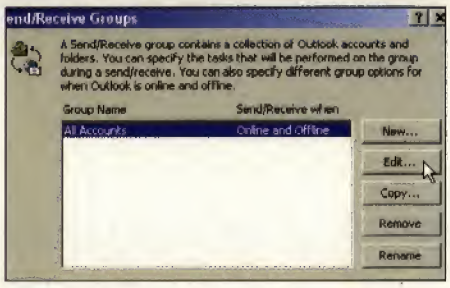
Jonathan Cramp

A **I was considering recommending one of the many spam filtering utilities when I discovered a feature that does almost exactly what you want within Outlook 2002 itself. Follow these steps.**



1 Find the tools

Open Outlook 2002 in the usual way and go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Options' command. When the Options control panel opens, click on the 'Mail Setup' tab and then click on the 'Send/Receive' button in the Send/Receive area.



2 Account management

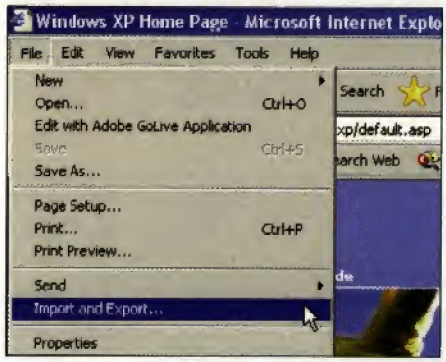
This next dialog is new to Outlook 2002; it does not appear in earlier versions. In the Send/Receive Groups dialog, select the Group Name in the window (there is usually just one group) and then click on the 'Edit' button.

Bookmark your pages

Q I've now got hundreds of bookmarks stored in Internet Explorer 6 and they are getting rather unmanageable. I know Microsoft calls them 'Favorites' but I prefer the term bookmark. Anyway, is there any way I can convert my bookmarks into a Web page and store it on the Web while making it my home page when I open Internet Explorer 6?

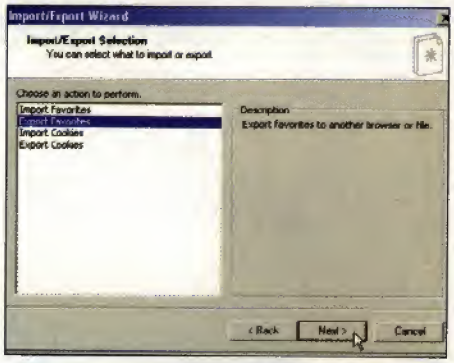
Alistair Pearson

A **You can do this quite easily because Internet Explorer 6 stores its Favorites as HTML files and exports the Favorites list as an HTML file using the Export command in the File menu. Follow these steps to create a bookmark page for the Web.**



1 Export your bookmarks

Open Internet Explorer 6 as usual and go to the 'File' menu and select the 'Import and Export' menu. When the Import and Export Wizard appears, click on the 'Next' button to get started.

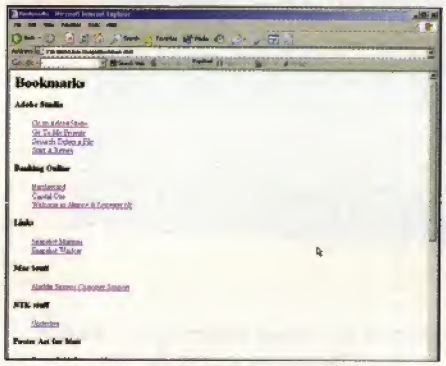


2 Choose your files

There are only four options to choose from in the Import and Export Wizard. You can import or export Favorites or you can import or export Cookies. Select 'Export Favorites' and click the 'Next' button.

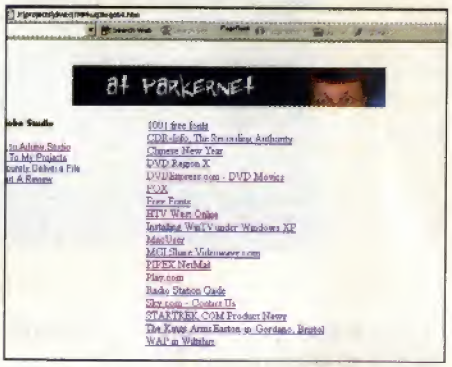
3 Choose the folder

You can export certain sections of your Favorites folder or export the whole set. To export everything, select the 'Favorites' folder at the top of the list and click 'Next'. Choose a file name and destination directory using the Windows file selector.



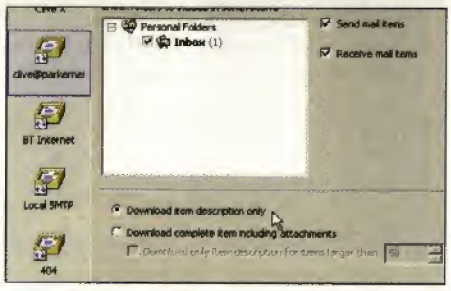
4 Open the bookmarks

Funnily enough, the default file name for the Favorites is BOOKMARK.HTM. Open Internet Explorer 6 and browse for the file you have just saved. You can use the Internet Options dialog box to make this your home page if you like.



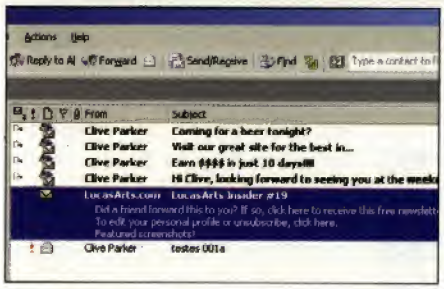
5 Jazz it up

If you don't like the look of the default bookmark Web page you can style it up in the same design as the rest of your Web site by using a Web page editor. You can upload the completed page to your Web site in the usual way.



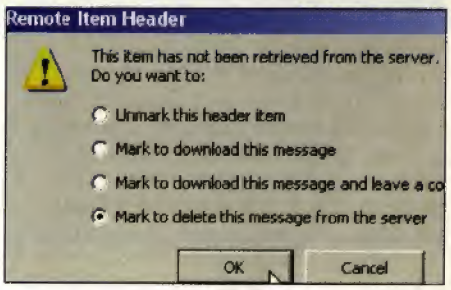
3 Choose the account

If you've been using email for a long time, you probably have more than one email account set up. Select the account that's been causing the problems in the Accounts bar and then select the 'Download item description only' radio button.



4 Send and receive

Click 'OK' to exit the page then exit the Options control panel. Perform a standard Send/Receive in Outlook 2002 and wait for the mail to download. A small image appears on the message envelope icon signifying they are still on the server.



5 Manual checking

Double-click each message on the server to determine what to do with it. If it's spam, mark it to be deleted. If you want to download it, mark it to be downloaded. On the next Send/Receive, selected messages will be deleted or downloaded.

JAMES SEABRIGHT ANSWERS YOUR WEB SITE BUILDING QUERIES. EMAIL HIM ON JAMES@PARAGON.CO.UK

Welcome your site's visitors with a personal touch

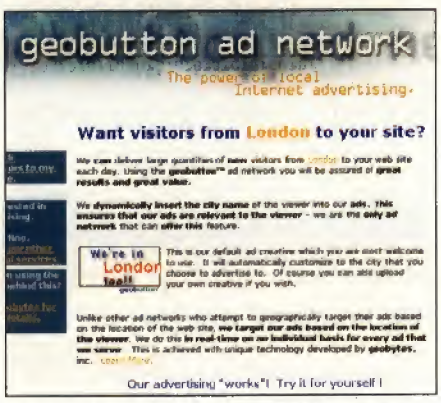
Q I've seen that some sites on the Net have taglines on their front page saying something like "We welcome visitors from London". How can they work out where a visitor is from, and is there any way I can get this sort of feature on my site without having to spend a small fortune?

Philip Fogg

A **The best way of getting this kind of feature on your site quickly and without spending any money is via GeoButton, which can be found at www.geobutton.com. It will provide you with the HTML you need to display either a small graphic naming the location of your visitor, or a text link. This is part of its marketing effort to get more advertisers to use its geographically-targeted service, although thankfully it doesn't swamp your site with adverts or pop-up windows.**

The service uses a slightly customised but fundamentally simple way of working out where the user is signing on from. Without getting into serious espionage methods, the best guess you can make on where a visitor is accessing your site from is based on a reverse name lookup on their IP address – which is the unique number that is used in routing information around the Net.

By doing a reverse lookup to check where the user's Internet provider is based, you can make a good guess at where they are located. You can have a go at this yourself by entering an IP address into the 'RIPE lookup' box at www.demon.net/external. Of course, for many dial-up customers in the UK, the Geobutton service will always return the answer 'London'; it works better for visitors from countries like the USA who are more likely to have a service provider based close to them geographically.



Welcome visitors with a geographically-specific message and track where in the world your site is most popular, all thanks to www.geobutton.com

Further frame frustration

Q First of all, excellent magazine, I read it avidly each month and always pick up an excellent tip or two – thank you very much. However, can you help, or put me in touch with Mark Purkiss? He sent you the tip to relieve frame frustration. I have inserted his code into my Web site (www.nfsa.org.uk) but it does not seem to have worked.

Colin Bond

A **Apologies for any confusion caused by the way the script was printed. The 'script hiding' tags, which are a standard feature of all JavaScripts, did not reproduce correctly in the magazine. We have printed the whole script again to resolve any**

Readers' tips

The Red Toolbox.com

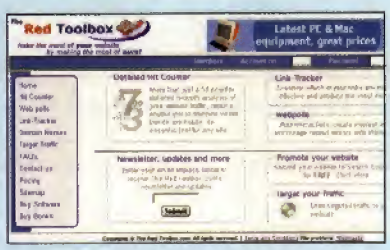
Upon reading your March 2002 issue of *Practical Internet*, I would like to thank you for your kind words about our company. On page 103 you recommended our site to your visitors under a question that was entitled 'Counter conundrum'.

Whilst we appreciate your review, you have not given your readers our correct name and URL. Just to clarify, we are The Red Toolbox.com at www.theredtoolbox.com.

Additionally, since your review we have added additional services to our site. Link Tracker allows you to track clicks on links, which is ideal for tracking visitors that leave your site via a link (ie affiliate programs, partners etc). You can also track links in emails, such as newsletters. Web polls allow you to add a Web poll to your site, thus increasing stickiness and interactivity. We also offer a free search engine submission tool, that will allow visitors to submit their site to the major search engines.

Darren Merrett

darren.merrett@theredtoolbox.com



confusion. Script hiding is still necessary to avoid upsetting older Web browsers. It basically works by fooling those browsers into thinking the JavaScript is just an HTML comment to hide from the site visitor. For the benefit of readers who didn't read the tip in issue 65, the script below will make sure your pages are not trapped inside frames created by other sites. Simply insert it after your <body> tag and it will leap into action when required.

```
<script type="javascript">
<!- -
if (top.frames.length!=0){
 if(window.location.href.replace)
  top.location.replace(self.location.href);
 else
  top.location.href=self.document.href;
}
//- ->
</script>
```

Friendly 404s

Q How can I create a custom '404 Page Not Found' message? I'm in the midst of trying to sort out some broken links, but in the meantime it would be great to have a page explaining this, rather than just a bland message saying 'Page not found'.

Anna Peel

A **Whether you can personalise your '404' error page depends on your Web site hosting package. Generally speaking, free home page hosts will not offer this option, although it is worth checking with your provider because the exact method of setting up a custom error page does vary. In your case, where you know that there is a problem with broken links, the best way forward is to run your site through a link checking program. That could be done online at a site like www.websitegarage.com, or by using the integral features of certain Web building packages like FrontPage. There are also a variety of shareware solutions available from the usual sources, like www.download.com and www.softseek.com.**

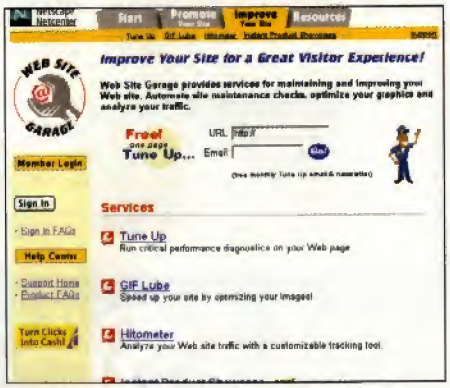
You can monitor the success of your efforts by checking the Web site log files, if your Web provider gives you access to them. If you find that outdated links outside of your control are causing the problem (for instance an external site with an old link to your pages), you could automatically redirect users to the correct page. The best way is to use 'htaccess' configuration files, if your Web provider permits. An alternative method would be a Meta Refresh tag like <meta http-equiv="Refresh" content="10;somewhere.html"> after the <head> tag of each page. Change the number and URL to suit the time in seconds until the page is loaded and the page to which the user should be forwarded.

Standards or bust

Q I am writing a simple text-based site, using Notepad. The code involves tables and external style sheets, which work fine. However, aspects of the style sheets trouble me. Can you recommend any style sheet or HTML validators that will work on a site that has not been uploaded?

Jane Quilley

A **You'd best off trying the official validation service provided by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), who is in charge of setting the standards of the Web including the HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) specifications. To validate a Web page using this service, go to http://validator.w3.org. You can then upload the files that need checking, or alternatively provide a Web address to check. The second option is preferable, even if the site is not online in a public way, as it will avoid time-consuming uploading of multiple files. You should put the draft site online in a sub-directory of your main site and point the**



You can get your site a free one-page checkup at www.websitegarage.com

Ease your style sheet nightmares with the help of CoffeeCup StyleSheet Maker – there's a free trial available from www.coffeecup.com/style

Readers' sites

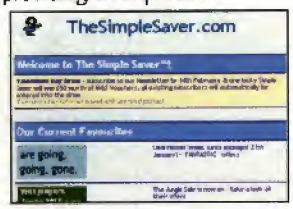
Share your site with us – send the URL to **james@paragon.co.uk**

Toy Breeds

URL: www.toybreeds.com
Creator: Louise Louis
Comment: If you are in the market for a 'toy breed' dog, this site provides you with excellent guidance on choosing the perfect pet and then learning about how to look after it. Many of the pages could be spruced up with some more images to illustrate what is being explained, but there is no faulting the ease of use or quality of content.

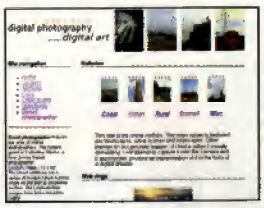
TheSimpleSaver.com

URL: www.thesimplesaver.com
Creator: Fran & Amanda
Comment: Setting up a Web site isn't top on the list of many working mums' priorities, but these two friends have done a fantastic job with this site, providing an impressive range of shopping hints and tips for the practically minded, value-conscious online shopper. The front page is quite 'busy' with lots of animated content, but the information provided is plentiful and useful.



Digital Photography & Art

URL: http://daveamis.freeservers.com
Creator: Dave Amis
Comment: There are some really great photos included on this site and they're very well presented. The information about where and when they were taken helps make the visitor feel like the site is more than just an online photo album. One sore point, though: Dave really needs to think about optimising his pictures for use on the Web – many of his images are quite bloated!



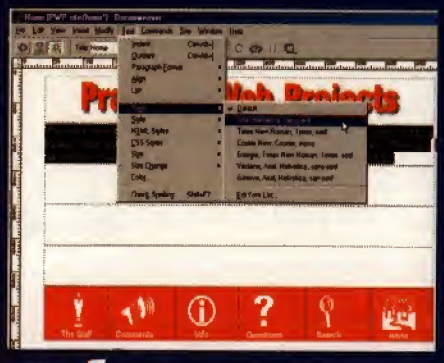
Practical Web Projects

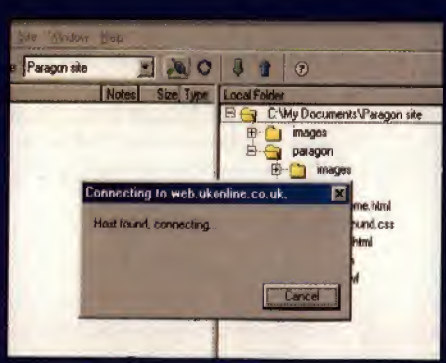
The complete, jargon-free guide to...

DREAMWEAVER

MAKE GREAT WEB SITES

Practical Web Projects is a new, bi-monthly magazine dedicated to demystifying the best Web creation software. Our third issue, onsale May 30th, is dedicated to Macromedia Dreamweaver. The latest version for Mac and Windows will be featured in the magazine, with step-by-step projects helping you to get started with the software and create superb-looking Web sites. There's also a cover CD-ROM packed with Dreamweaver Extensions, other Macromedia resources and files from the tutorials.





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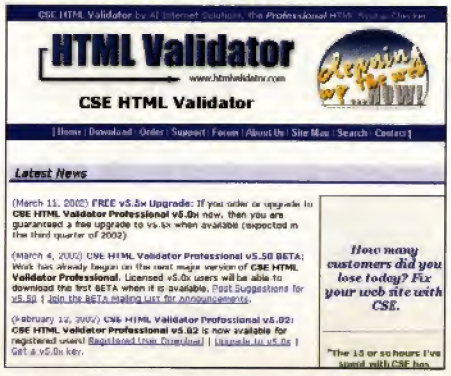

Check your Web coding offline by downloading software from www.htmlvalidator.com

validator at it – that way you can test it all works online without granting public access to the site.

If you're determined to use a software solution to check your HTML, take a look at www.htmlvalidator.com for details of one useful package. As for style sheets, you can get assistance in ironing out problems by visiting the W3C CSS Validator at http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator.

Let's go to embed

Q Could you advise on how to embed compressed files in a Web page? I have come across sites where you can download files in ZIP format by clicking on a link. How is this coded in HTML?

Edward Fletcher

A **Creating a link to download a ZIP archive or other file is done in exactly the same way as creating a link to another Web page. If you have a file called 'mystuff.zip' in the same directory as the Web page where you are linking from, then the appropriate HTML would be:**

Click here to download the ZIP archive here.

It's helpful to users if they know how big the download is – simply finding out the file size and putting it in brackets after the link is a good way of doing this. Windows users can find out a file size by right-clicking on the icon and selecting 'Properties' in the pop-up menu that appears; Mac users need to click once on the file and then select 'Get Info' from the 'File' menu.

When you come to putting your site online, upload the ZIP archive together with the HTML files and graphics, and then check the link online to ensure that everything works. It's worth downloading the file from the site and then opening it, just to check and make sure the transfer has been successful. If something's gone wrong, ensure that your FTP client is set to transfer the archive in 'Binary' mode and send it again.

Sing-along-a-link

Q How can I make a sound file play when a link is clicked? I already know how to make background music play, but that's not what I'm after.

Diane Christensen

A **It would be possible to play a sound when a link is clicked by using the JavaScript 'onClick' property within the <a> tag. However, this raises two problems. Firstly, there will be a pause after the link is clicked, while the sound is downloaded and the plug-in started to play it. This could be partially improved by preloading the sound, but there will still be an awkward pause that would make many users think their click wasn't registered. The other problem is that many browsers have problems doing two things at once, like loading a clicked link and playing a sound. Even if you try to help it along with a JavaScript that handles both tasks, results remain unreliable at best.**

An alternative approach would be to delay the sound playing until the new page had loaded. This is easily done by adding this code just after the <body> tag:

<object data="mysound.wav" type="audio/x-wav"><param name=autostart value=true><param name=hidden value=true></object>

This way, the sound delay occurs when the user has reached their destination, which will cause much less confusion. My view on Web site sound is that it is rarely a good design move when used by itself, and as such it makes more sense to create a comprehensive audio-visual experience using Flash.

Click here, link there

Q Is it possible to make a mouseover image appear in a different frame to the link? For example, if the left-hand frame contains a link when the user puts their mouse over the link, is it possible for an image to change in the right-hand frame?

Ken Beale

A **All you need to do is alter the JavaScript that creates the mouseover**

Snap, crackle and pop-ups

Q I would like to link to a document from within my Web site (for example a CV), which would then pop up in another smaller Internet Explorer window. I really would appreciate your help, as my technical attempts have been fruitless. Thank you, and the team, for such an informative magazine.

Christine Nixon

A **The steps shown here provide the code you need to make a pop-up window. This presumes that you can access your page's HTML code and edit it manually. If your Web creation software doesn't have a built-in feature to allow this, just open the page in Notepad and edit it from there. One important thing to bear in mind is that users can quickly become frustrated if you use too many of these techniques on your site – remember that most Internet users hate pop-up adverts!**

```
<script language="javascript">
<!- -
function popwindow() {
window.open ('popup2.html', 'popupthing',
config='height=100, width=400, toolbar=no,
menubar=no, scrollbars=no, resizable=no,
location=no, directories=no, status=no')
}
- ->
</script>
```

1 Script for a pop up window

This code should be placed just before the </head> tag of your Web page. It creates a function for popping up a window, which will be put into action in step two. The popping up is done with one long line of script beginning 'window.open'.

```
<a href="#"
onClick="popwindow()">Click here
to pop up</a>
```

2 Trigger the pop-up window

The code here is just one way of triggering the pop-up – you could alter the BODY tag to read <body onload="popwindow()"> to generate the pop-up window when the page loads. This does of course run the risk of being mistaken for an advertisement that may be closed straight away by the user.

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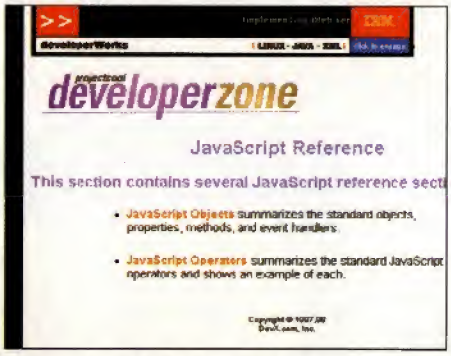


The comprehensive JavaScript reference is just one of the handy resources available from www.projectcool.com

effect, to direct the browser at the other frame. A standard mouseover script will contain a reference like 'document [imgName].src', which refers to the source (src) of a particular image (imgName) on the same page (document). Notice that to decode these references you just need to read from right to left. So it makes sense that if we're referring to something bigger than the document itself, this will be tagged onto the left-hand end of the reference. If we are referring to another frame, it's easiest if that frame has a name (achieved by adding a NAME property to the relevant <frame> tag). To refer to an image in a frame called 'right', we would use the notation 'top.right.document [imgName].src'. The 'top' section refers to the frameset, the document that defines the frames, and 'right' to the frame of that name within the frameset. When you've worked out the correct object reference, just drop it into the mouseover code and it should make the specified image rollover. You can find out more about JavaScript Objects by visiting the Project Cool reference pages at www.projectcool.com/developer/jsz/jsref/index.html.

Turning the tables

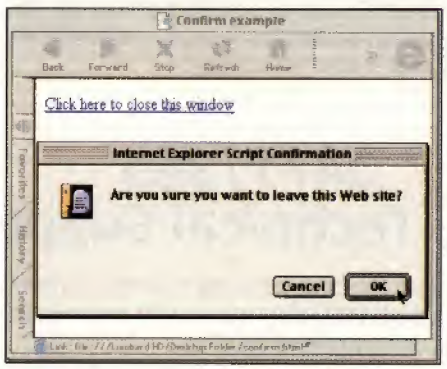
Q I find HTML tables useful in structuring my home page, although I always seem to have problems persuading the tables to appear at the width and height sizes specified in the HTML. Is there a way around this problem?

Daisy Ryan

A Tables are unpredictable at the best of times. The only sure way of taming them is to use invisible graphics to force the Web browser into following your orders! This is very easy to do. First of all, create a one pixel by one pixel image, filling it with black. Save it as a GIF, and specify the transparency colour as black. This gives you a completely see-through image, which can be resized using HTML's WIDTH and HEIGHT tag properties to force the table cell in question to fill a certain space.

Webmonkey (www.webmonkey.com) is a great resource for Web builders, and includes a section on KTML tables

Snap, crackle and pop-ups, cont'd



3 Customise the pop-up

You can change the appearance of the pop-up by altering the code shown in step one. There are lots of options you can change, ranging from size to the appearance of toolbars. To activate an option, just change the code to read 'yes' instead of 'no'.

4 Take pop-ups further

Pop-up windows aren't the only kind of active user alert that JavaScript can create. For instance, you could use JavaScript to create alert messages to warn users before they do something. Take a look at **www.javascriptkit.com** to find out more.

Design Doctor

Eastern Studios

Creator: Phil Parish
URL: www.easternstudios.co.uk

THIS SITE PROMOTES a small video, photographic and Web site production studio, whose owner confesses he likes to keep designs simple and quick to load. The Doctor has a few choice treatments in mind to help Phil achieve this worthy goal.

A PICTURE IS WORTH...

...somewhat less than a thousand words, according to the lack of descriptions provided for the photos on this site. Admittedly it would spoil the look of the gallery to provide flowing prose alongside each picture, but it would be good to make the images clickable. Perhaps they could link to a larger version of the photo complete with description, possibly presented in a pop-up window.

DRAWING A LINE

The designer's decision to use text underlining both on links and some headings is very confusing. It is not easy to distinguish which text items are clickable without waving the mouse pointer over them. The whole navigation system of the site could do with a rethink, especially with regards to the page bottoms. It is a good idea to provide more than just a link to the main page labelled 'Back'.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION COMES UNDER FIRE

It's frustrating to click on a link and wait for a page to load, only to discover that the section is 'Under Construction'. It is particularly pointless to put a Web site online when one of its three major sections is not ready. This combination of mortal design sins is even worse when you consider this site is trying to market professional Web design services...

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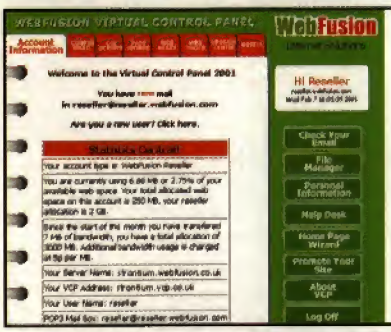

Virtual Control Panel

The Virtual Control Panel 2001 (VCP) allows you to automatically control your web site without any knowledge of programming! You can install discussion boards & guest books in seconds, take complete control of all your e-mail, password protect directories and install FrontPage.

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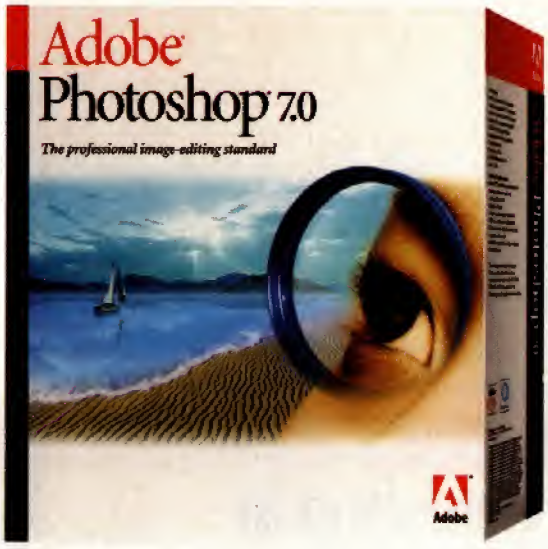
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ALL THE LATEST NEW INTERNET HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE



Adobe Photoshop 7

It's long been the tool of design professionals, but will the new features of Adobe Photoshop 7 tempt you? We see what's on offer on page 128

Ricoh Caplio RR1

It may look a little freaky, but this retro snapper is more than capable of taking a mean picture. We put it through its paces on page 134

On test this issue...

Audio Cleaning Lab Deluxe 3.0

Clean up your tunes with this multi-talented program 132

Microshop Online Pro

Convert any eCommerce ideas you have into a fully-fledged store 132

Opus Pro 2002

Parade multimedia presentations on the Net with Opus Pro 2002 133

Memorex BBQ200

Nothing to do with burning burgers, the BBQ200 is actually a sturdy CD-RW 136

Labtec AXIS-711

Communicating online is made easy with this stylish digital headset 136

FilmScan 1800

Quickly produce digital photos from a film camera with this scanner 137

e-M@ilerplus

Amstrad serves up its latest piece of Internet innovation with the e-M@ilerplus 137

Welcome...

PHOTOSHOP HAS LONG BEEN regarded as the last word in professional image-editing and now Adobe has updated its flagship product with Photoshop 7. We cast a critical eye over the latest version of this princely graphics package on page 128.

Among the other software solutions we've examined this month you'll find applications for perfecting MP3 sound quality, building an eCommerce store and creating multimedia Web-based presentations.

In addition to testing this mountain of hot new software, we've also found time to try the latest Net gadgets, including the rather funky Rioch Caplio digital camera, Labtec voice chat headphones, a film scanner and Amstrad's innovative e-M@ilerplus.

James Thornton, Staff Writer

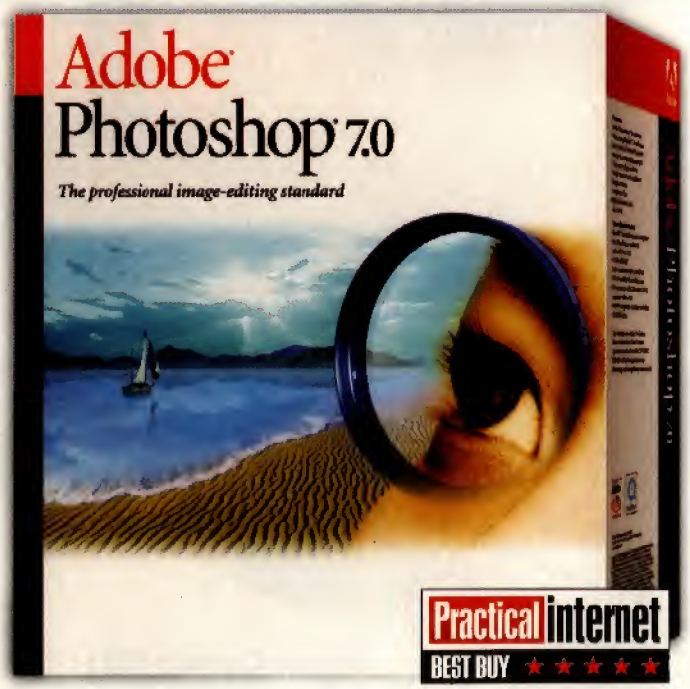
Our reviewing system

Look out for the 'Best Buy' logo. This cherished accolade is only awarded to the best products each month

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Adobe Photoshop 7.0

PHOTOSHOP IS ARGUABLY THE WORLD'S LEADING IMAGING SOFTWARE. **ROB CLYMO** FINDS OUT WHY VERSION 7.0, WITH ITS REVISED INTERFACE, IS THE BEST VERSION YET



Editing digitised versions of your pictures has become something we take for granted now that modern day computers have the ability to work all kinds of magic. Of course, this is no new phenomenon and Adobe's Photoshop has been around in various guises for several years now. However, we've seen it grow from a somewhat limited software package into a veritable monster. Early incarnations of PhotoShop would only offer a fraction of the features we take for granted today. Indeed, back then, something like cropping an image or adjusting its colour balance was seen as a bit of a luxury. Nowadays, as home users, we expect these features, while graphic design professionals demand them.

Adobe has certainly met requests for improvements within Photoshop and the new version, 7.0, is undoubtedly the most impressive image-editing suite that we've ever seen. Indeed, there is little to rival Photoshop – with the consequence that Adobe can pretty much name its price.

That price is doubtless the thing that will put people off – but it's the only reason not to get acquainted with PhotoShop 7.0. The latest incarnation carries many of the trademark features that we tend to take for granted from this program, but it also introduces some subtle improvements, alongside the odd surprise or two. Of course, being such a complex program means that there is a tendency for the less experienced user not to fully appreciate the power of Photoshop, but that's no bad thing. Some of these tools can really tie you up in knots with their incredible flexibility. In that respect, the more amateur picture enthusiast might be better suited to purchasing Photoshop's budget-based Elements package, which retails for well under £100 but still sports a similar, though cut down, array of tools.

"GRAPHICS PROFESSIONALS WILL SALIVATE OVER THIS NEW TOY"

Tooling around

However, if you're in need of some serious image-editing muscle then Photoshop 7.0 is definitely your bag. Nestling alongside it, of course, is the ImageReady 3.0 program. This is still set-up as a standalone application that comes supplied with the Photoshop package and which you access by merely jumping to from the main toolbar. Nevertheless, ImageReady has a wealth of Web-editing tools that don't come as standard within the Photoshop environment, although the latter has incorporated more Web-related features into the last couple of versions.

Browser arouser

Armed with it's host of new and improved tools, PhotoShop 7.0 now has everything you need to help streamline your workflow. The new File Browser feature is a wonderful idea. This gadget allows you to search for your images visually and gives you thumbnail previews of the contents of folders. Other picture management tasks such as batch editing or sorting of large volumes of images is also much swifter.

Then there's the Healing Brush – a tool that enables you to remove detrimental elements from images. This amazing feature delivers particularly impressive results when working with skin textures, although it needs dextrous manipulation to get the best out of it. All the same, graphics professionals will doubtless be salivating at the unveiling of this new toy.

ImageReady sports new and improved features too. Web optimising techniques have been spruced up and there is clearly a strong emphasis on keeping up with emerging technologies. Hence

the reason Adobe have added options for previewing and saving your Web images in the WBMP format, one which is most commonly associated with PDA's or wireless devices.

Other improvements

Elsewhere, Photoshop has been further tweaked to make sure all bases are covered. Management of type was never one of the program's greatest strengths, but has improved substantially in recent years. Version 7.0 takes that a step further, thanks in particular to the spellchecker. Those with deft painting skills will also find that the new painting engine allows the user to produce amazing results with the dazzling array of drawing and painting brushes included with the package. Control of colour and the editing tools has become the peak of precision too and, of course, there is always the option of creating your own tools for a particular job. Plug-in filters and effects have always been a Photoshop highpoint and version 7.0 does not disappoint. The Liquefy option, for example, enables you to create bizarre or exotic zoom, warp and pan effects with an almost infinite level of control.

The bigger picture

Overall, looking at version 7.0 of this image-editing package shows much to celebrate. Some revamped software packages offer little in the way of anything new and therefore represent poor value for money. Photoshop 7.0, however, pushes its already awesome potential still further with a raft of new tools.

Adobe has worked long and hard to remove some of the drudgery that can be associated with repetitive graphics tasks. Their Data-Driven Graphics developments mean that complicated and dull Web graphic work can be turned into a much less painless experience. Naturally, you can still expect Photoshop 7.0 to consistently deliver when it comes to more mundane image-editing tasks, but it's the ever-expanding capabilities of this program that really justify the hefty price tag. True, there are similarly styled image-editing packages out there on the market retailing at under £100, but if you're looking for a graphics tool that pretty much takes this field of software to its current limits then Photoshop 7.0 still has to be the number one.

The verdict

Software: Adobe Photoshop 7.0
Price: £586.33
Tel: 0208 6064001
URL: www.adobe.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★★
Overall:	★★★★★

✔ Amazing set of tools

✖ Expensive and complicated to use in places

Get to grips with Photoshop's new features...

1 The File browser

By using the easily viewed thumbnail preview of a folder you can examine images on your hard disc, across a network or on a CD-ROM and all manner of other storage mediums.

2 The Healing Brush

The new Healing Brush offers previously unobtainable options. This invaluable tool enables you to work on normally tricky areas like skin tones with consummate ease.

3 Output to the Web

There's now a dazzling array of possibilities for saving compressed graphics for the Web, and a direct effort to conquer emerging formats like PDA and wireless graphics.

4 The Paint tools

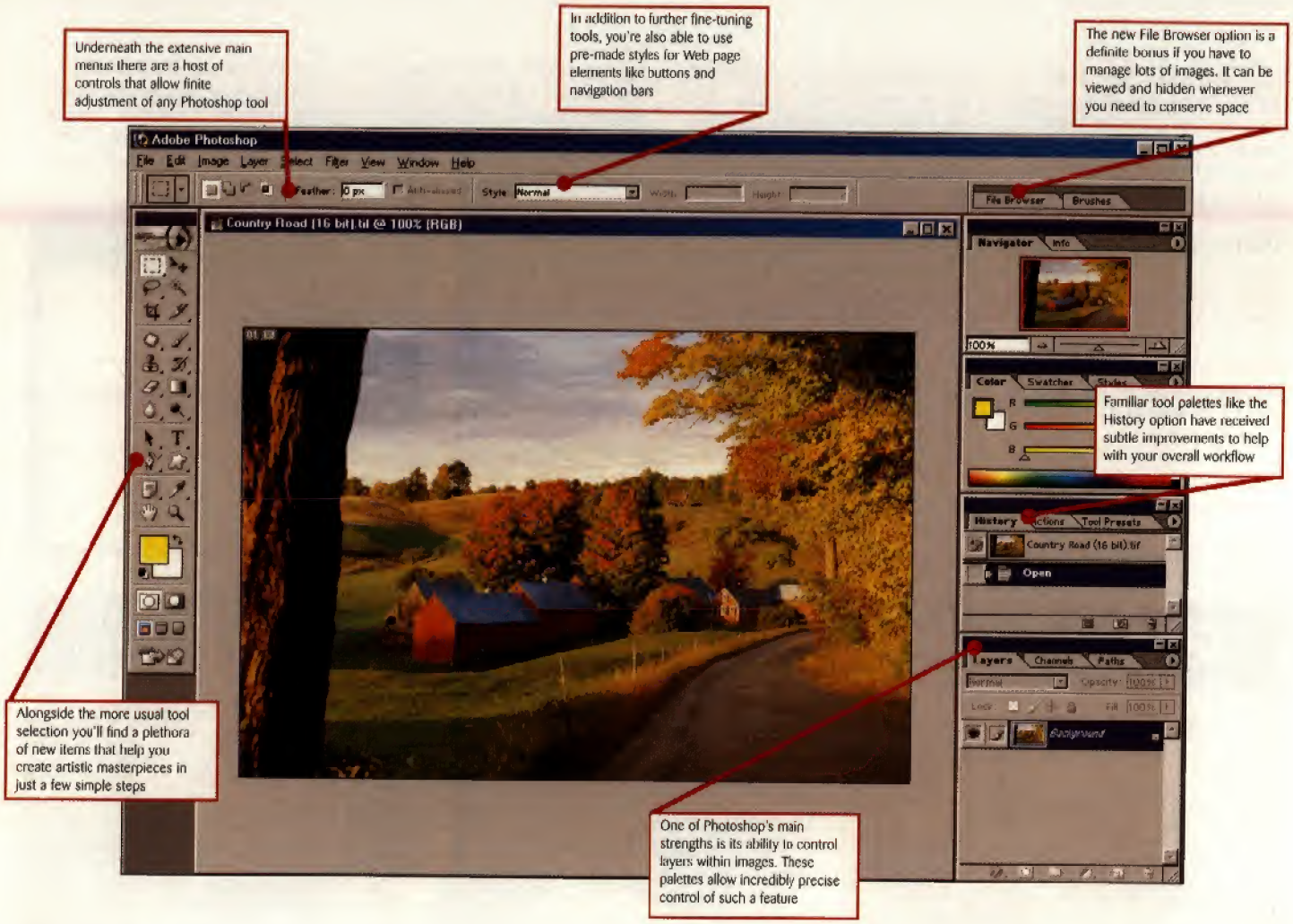
Recreate works of art using pastels, paint and charcoal. Even those with reasonable skills can now create superb digitised pictures with all the depth and colour of traditional paintings.

5 The liquefying plug-in

The Liquefy plug-in, means you can now really go to town with image manipulation. Zoom, pan or adding turbulence can now be applied, or removed, as the mood takes you.

6 Print your images

Version 7.0 addresses traditionally sketchy printing problems, offering unparalleled print options. You can even output images as one flattened document or separate layers.



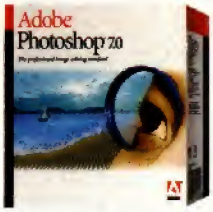
Getting to grips with Photoshop 7.0's tools

It'll take you a while to really appreciate many of the new features within Photoshop 7.0. For example, the Pattern Maker option is a tool that can keep you occupied for hours on end. It allows acute control of settings and enables you to manipulate a picture into a dazzling pattern that can then be saved or exported as necessary. This isn't one of the easiest tools to get the best out of, but once you've mastered its power you'll find that it is an invaluable addition to the program's already hefty arsenal. It has to be said that there are many other programs on the market which can offer lots of the features you'll find here and for a lot less money. However, chances are that they won't allow you to carry out your photo manipulation chores with quite the same ease and with the extensive range of options as those found here. Many of the tools require a lot of practice, the end results can be nothing short of stunning.

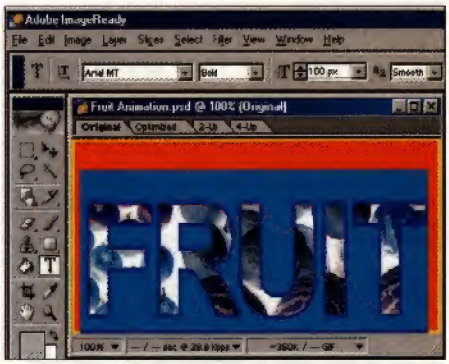
The multi-faceted Photoshop has plenty of new tools to play with. The Pattern Maker option, for example

Don't forget Image Ready

CREATING ANIMATED IMAGES FOR THE WEB IS SURPRISINGLY QUICK AND EASY THANKS TO IMAGEREADY'S REVISED PALETTES



BEING ABLE TO combine the excellent new text manipulation features in ImageReady with the ultra-flexible animation palette means that there are now countless possibilities when producing content for the Web. The controls are also much improved on their older counterparts, meaning many more opportunities for the less experienced to create stunning images with the minimum of work. Of course, the overall Photoshop package is made all the better thanks to its paring with ImageReady. Version 3.0 sees the Web dedicated software application springing more than a few surprises, not least of which is its ability to allow super-fast creation of animations. The program offered this previously, but the process is much more streamlined in it's latest incarnation. ImageReady is also a lot easier to use than it might initially appear, as our screenshots testify.

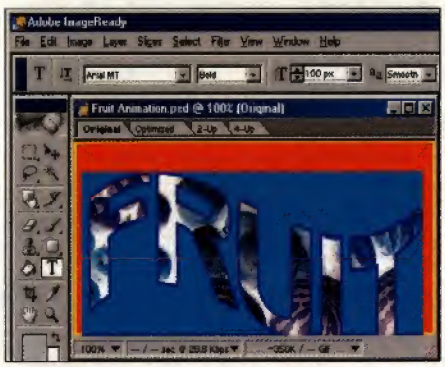


1 Creating an animation

Start with a blank canvas and then add the various elements needed in the file. You will need to create different frames for each part of the animation.

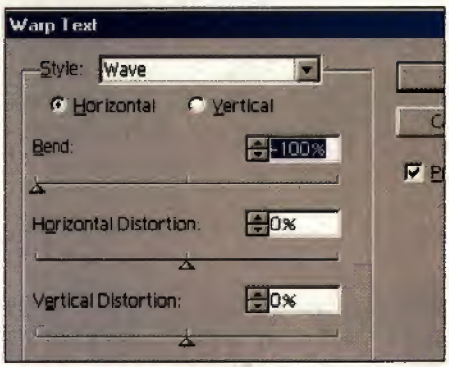
2 Meet the Layers palette

Make use of the Layers palette to control the complexity of your image. This is ideal for creating animations as it allows you to make various elements visible or invisible depending on how the animation plays.



3 Manipulating text

Here you can see that we have been able to twist the text by making a few simple adjustments. Obviously, changing the text in different frames of your animation means that the overall series of frames will generate the impression of movement.



4 Warping text

The Warp Text palette that displays all of the various controls for manipulating your wording. Simply drag the sliders backwards and forwards in order to twist and shape the various text elements within your file.

5 Adding extra frames

The Animation palette enables you to add, edit or delete extra frames whenever the need arises. You can also spend time tweaking the amount of overall frames so that the finished animation works seamlessly.

6 Previewing your frames

The palette at the bottom of the ImageReady interface lets you control the way your animation works. What's more, you can also use this area to test run your animation and make sure that it looks consistent.

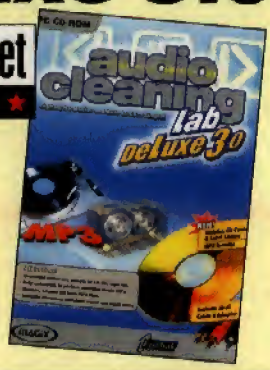
7 The finished article

Here we see the end results – a file that can now be previewed in a Web browser. Notice that ImageReady also creates the necessary HTML code immediately underneath the file itself, saving you valuable time.

Audio Cleaning Lab DeLuxe 3.0

PERFECT EVEN THE MOST TAINTED OF TUNES WITH THE HELP OF THIS COMPLETE CLEANING KIT

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★



THE MORE TECHNICALLY savvy out there cottoned on to the benefits of an MP3 lifestyle a good while ago. You can forget about fiddling around with stereos and the like, and instead kit yourself out with a gigantic jukebox, filled with every song you've ever owned.

There is, however, one fly in the ointment. Whether you've picked up your entire MP3 collection online, or you've lovingly converted all of your genuine White Label vinyl into electronic format, quality is always an issue. – a crackly record is a crackly record.

Thankfully, you no longer have to wince every time your favourite Abba 12-inch wheezes like an 80-a-day man after running the London Marathon. Audio Cleaning Lab DeLuxe 3.0 from Magix promises to renovate and rejuvenate even the most jaded and demoralised of tunes. From vinyl conversions to CDs which jump around, this is all you need for perfect sounds.

Audio cleaners are gaining in popularity, but this particular package boasts a unique take on the genre. As well as the software, more on which in a moment, you get a cable that allows you to connect your hi-fi, record player, four track or whatever, to your PC. Plug it in, press record on the interface, and you've instantly turned your favourite old skool seven-inch into an MP3.

Close to the edit

It's when you come to start fixing tracks that Audio Cleaning Lab comes into its own. In short, you can eradicate hissing, scratching and cackling with a few simple mouse clicks – the cleaning wizard makes it incredibly easy by analysing your songs and deciding on the appropriate action.

Conoisseurs will want to get their fingers dirty, though, and there's plenty of opportunity to manually correct any glitches yourself. What's more, Audio Cleaning Labs restores at sample-tastic 24 Bit quality, which offers a better dynamic range than the standard 16 Bits.

Just when you thought you were happy with your corrected songs, you'll also find 24 sound effects to beef up tracks. With reverb and echo among this list, you get a decent idea of what to expect. You even get facilities to change tempo and pitch. Is this everything you'll ever need to turn an analog track into digital? We think it might be, you know. ■

The verdict

Software: Audio Cleaning Lab DeLuxe 3.0
Price: £29.99
Tel: 01923 495496
URL: www.magix.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★★

✔ Brilliant suite of utilities for fixing glitches in music

✖ Tempts you to spend your whole life tinkering around

Micro-shop Online Pro

CONVERT YOUR IDEAS INTO A FULLY-FLEDGED ONLINE STORE WITH THIS EASY TO USE TOOL

THE BURSTING OF The dotcom bubble turned a lot of people off the whole scene once and for all, but recent signs of life in the old dog should prove to you that there is a way to make money on the Web. Microshop-online comes with such an edict in mind, and promises to make the whole concept simpler than ever before.

After making bespoke eCommerce solutions for up-and-coming companies for some time now, this is B2B's first venture into the consumer market, and it's fair to say that the boy done good.

In effect, Microshop-online works like two separate programs in one. On the one hand, you have the beginners' version, which allows you to build up a shop in virtually no time. Making full use of the wizard system of operation, you really only have to click a couple of times, enter your information, then tell the program which pics to use, and you've got yourself an eCommerce site. Granted, it's not going to win any awards, but it's a decent basic site to start with.

Advanced shoppers

Like the best programs, Microshop-online combines this intuitive, instantly accessible interface with staggering depth. Once you start delving into the inner depths of this program, you'll find that there are more options than you thought you'd ever want to see. For every product you create in the program, there are seemingly endless possibilities, including a whole range of drop-down menus that appear next to the item on the Web site. So, you see, not only do you get a wealth of choices to pick from, but your customers do as well. (And just in case you were wondering, there's a 10,000 product limit.)

The only problem we could see with the package is that you currently have to host your site on the B2B servers. Obviously this shouldn't inconvenience you too much, but does put more moolah in the B2B coffers. Incidentally, we reviewed the Professional edition of the package, which offers a more advanced feature set than the basic Microshop-online program. The lesser version retails at £149. ■

Serious businesses are probably better off opting for the Professional edition of Microshop-online

The verdict

Software: Microshop-online Professional
Price: £249.99
Tel: 0800 0859881
URL: www.mircroshop-online.com

Features:	★★★★½
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★½

✔ Excellent tools for getting your business on the Net

✖ You have to host your site on the B2B servers

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Opus Pro 2002

PARADE EXCITING MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATIONS ON THE NET WITH THIS UPDATED VERSION OF DIGITAL WORKSHOP'S OPUS PRO

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS about making an impression on the Net you'll need to do more than just knock out a couple of text-heavy Web pages spouting out the message that you want to get through.

A far more effective means of promoting yourself or, indeed, the services you offer is to create an interactive online publication that has got enough dynamism and 'oomph' to grab your visitors and ensure that they sit tight while you ram the message home. Coding such a creation yourself using HTML, Java or Flash would probably have you tied up until the next ice age, so that's why Illuminatus Opus Pro was put on the Earth.

This latest version of the software still boasts a bevy of tools for helping you construct lively, self-contained interactive presentations by combining text, clipart, photos, video and animation.

Star performer

The interface hasn't evolved much since the last version of the software, which is no bad thing as it's highly intuitive and gives you easy access to a bonanza of features. Listing all of these would take up virtually the whole magazine, but the features include multiple master pages, vector drawing tools, path and script based animation, WYSIWYG on-screen text editing and custom scrollbars.

While the updates in this 2002 version have been somewhat minimal, it's possible to say that it's an application that is damn-near perfect anyway. The new version removes the Direct X clashes that would occasionally crop up when using an ill-equipped browser in the past. Several areas of the software's performance have been improved slightly, most notably the video playback, which now runs as smooth as silk. Perhaps the main change is the advent of connectivity with Opus Flex, a new extension that allows publications to be exported to Flash for those hooked on Macromedia's sexy format.

Although not a major upgrade on the previous version (in fact, registered users can upgrade for free) Opus Pro 2002 is a fantastically simple way of creating stylish multimedia Web presentations. Amazingly, this simplicity is not at the expense of powerful features which are included in abundance. If you haven't already come across this one, it's definitely worth a look. ■

The verdict

Software: Opus Pro 2002
Price: £249.95
Tel: 0870 120 2186
URL: www.digitalworkshop.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★½
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★½

✔ Powerful and easy to use

✖ Slightly pricey for casual users

Ricoh Caplio RR1

IT MIGHT LOOK WEIRD, BUT THIS RETRO SNAPPER TAKES A MEAN PICTURE, AS **THOMAS WATSON** FINDS OUT

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

You get used to things being the way they are. A car, no matter what refinements its makers have built into it, looks fundamentally like a car. Likewise, a camera looks like a camera – even if it's the latest digital innovation. This is why we were slightly surprised when the Ricoh Caplio RR1 landed on our desk recently.

Boasting a retro look that manages to both attract and repel in equal measures, the Ricoh just begs you to start playing James Bond. With its sleek, slimline exterior and curvacious façade, the Caplio looks like it belongs in a tacky 1960s spy drama.

In short, the Caplio left us with quite a gimmicky impression on first glance, and we actually wondered for a brief nanosecond if someone was playing an elaborate hoax, and had dropped us a 110mm point and click number on us. But £749.99 is no gimmick price, and the Ricoh is so packed full of high quality features and functions that you quickly grow to love its unusual styling.

Pixel power

As a consequence of the retro For a start, a 4.13 megapixel rating is not to be sniffed at. Amounting to a massively impressive top resolution of 2,272 x 1,704, this will please all but the most power-hungry photographic professionals out there. For the more mundane out there, you can also make use of the nine different resolution settings, to fill up your styling, the LCD unit has had to be completely redesigned. Rather than trying to squeeze it into the petite casing, which would have resulted in just about the smallest LCD in the world, Ricoh has gone down another road. What you get instead is the snap-around affair normally reserved for digital camcorders. Like so many other aspects of this unique photographic marvel, it takes a bit of getting used to, but actually proves far more user-friendly in the long run. Part of the appeal of the shiftable 2-inch LCD is that it allows you to snap away both in landscape and portrait mode comfortably. You'll even find a supplementary shutter button next to the lens which makes awkward snapping a whole lot easier.

"4.13 MEGAPIXELS AMOUNTS TO AN IMPRESSIVE TOP RESOLUTION"

In fact, despite a front end that should really scare you off, the Ricoh Caplio is a remarkably easy to use affair. Just below the smaller LCD, which itself gives you information on the number of shots and battery power remaining, you'll find the four main buttons. These give you access to the multiplicity of flash modes available, as well as allowing you to toggle between picture resolutions. You can also switch between the internal 8Mb of memory or the SmartMedia card inserted into the camera, and turn on the macro mode.

When you flip up the main LCD, you'll find another collection of buttons designed for navigation around the startlingly crisp screen menus and functions. Granted, the Ricoh menu method isn't the most intuitive on the market, but even the most intelligence-challenged should be able to work out the main features after a couple of minutes spent messing around. Likewise, the zoom control resides in a strangely fiddly place, making it occasionally difficult to zoom whilst actually looking at the subject.

Who's zooming who?

Amid all this talk of controls, LCDs and flashes, it's easy to forget the most important element of all – taking pictures. The Caplio comes equipped with a hefty 3x optical zoom, supplemented by another 3x of digital zoom. As always, though, we'd suggest turning the digital zoom off, because you're only going to regret it when you get home from a day's snapping to discover a collection of pixelated disasters. The zoom tends to fly in and out rather inaccurately, making it difficult to frame the shot perfectly. Thankfully, you can instantly crop your results with the use of the appropriately titled 'crop' tool on the LCD to sort out any particularly problematic photos.

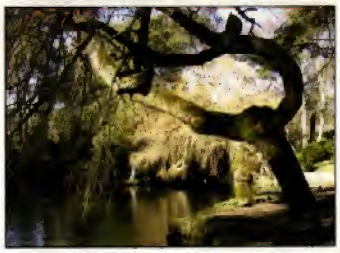
Let's get close

Snapping away, you'll be impressed with the quality of the Ricoh's output. The 4.13 megapixel lens is put to excellent use, returning crisp, clear and sharp images every time. Apart from the fantastic colour representation and sheer clarity of

Picture Perfect...

Don't be fooled by the RR1's idosyncratic appearance, it takes some super shots as you can see on the left...

The LCD display, flipped up for action



the pictures you can snaffle, the Caplio has another trick up its overfilled sleeve. A quick press of the 'macro' button in the main panel lets you get much closer to the action, much closer in fact than with just about any other similarly-priced camera. While you'd normally bargain for decent macro facility on a camera of this quality, Ricoh goes that step further by offering you genuine 1cm macro action. Yes, this means you can take a picture of something from half an inch away. Whether you'd want to or not is a different matter, but features like this simply ram home the superiority of the Caplio.

Extra, extra

Adding yet more strings to its already impressive bow, the Caplio comes with a capable 72Mb of memory. Split between the internal memory (8Mb) and the supplied SmartMedia card (64Mb), this is substantially more than the piddly 8Mb or 16Mb you normally have to console yourself with when shelling out big bucks for a digicam. Even at top resolution, this will give you more than 50 shots, which should be more than enough for a day's candid shooting.

Speaking of which, the battery pack used is a Lithium rechargeable unit. Alas, you have to take it out of the camera to recharge the power, but a blast charge at night should be more than enough to give you enough juice for a whole day out in the field. Even when the battery is relatively depleted, you'll find that the camera starts up sharpish, saving you the hassle of waiting around to take snaps.

Although many people tend to concentrate on taking high quality shots, the Ricoh Caplio houses a variety of multimedia options designed to give you more for your money. For a start, you can capture video footage, the length of which is only limited by the size of the memory card you have in the machine. There's also an audio capture facility, which will store ultra high-quality sound. The supplied 64Mb card is enough to hold some two hours of audio, which should suffice. As if this wasn't enough, you also get a 'text mode', which takes high contrast copies of text documents.

In short, this might look like a cheapy point and click affair from the early 1980s, but you'll struggle to find a similarly-priced camera which offers picture quality and control anywhere near this good.

Ricoh Caplio controls

The verdict

Product: Ricoh Caplio RR1
Price: £749.99
Tel: 01782 753300
URL: www.ricoh.co.uk

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★½
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★★

✔ Sleek, slimline camera with oodles of quality to boot

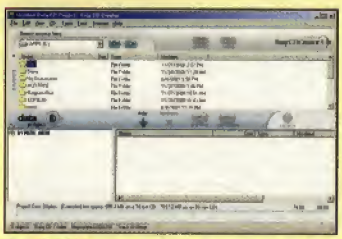
✘ Retro looks give make it look cheap. Dodgy zoom facility

Memorex BBQ200

IT MAY SOUND LIKE A SOUPED-UP SAUSAGE GRILLING IMPLEMENT BUT THE BBQ200 IS ACTUALLY A STURDY CD-RW

THINK OF MEMOREX and you might reminisce about a time when blank tapes ruled the world and everyone who was anyone recorded their favourite tunes or Spectrum games on cassette.

Times have changed, though and the company is keen to prove it's abreast of the latest technological developments, with the release of this rather nifty CD-RW. As an external device the BBQ200 sits rather neatly on its back or on its side, thanks to its PS2-style base, which means you can store it pretty much anywhere you like on your work surface.



The BBQ200 is bundled with a superb range of software, including Easy CD Creator (above)

The key to the BBQ200's effectiveness lies in its portability. The USB interface makes rigging it up to your machine effortless and, along with an excellent range of burning software that includes the likes of Roxio Easy CD Creator 5.0 and Direct CD, the BBQ200 automatically fits onto your computer like a particularly snug glove. What's more, the USB connectivity means that whether you've got a PC or a Mac you can still enjoy plug-and-play burning of all your favourite files.

Of course, as it's a rewriter you can use the discs time and time again, meaning that you can chuck out files once you've finished with them without having to fork out for new disks all the time.

Slow coach

With writing and overwriting speeds clocking in at just 4x, and 6x speed reading, the drive lags a fair way distance behind many of its rivals in terms of raw burning power. However, we experienced virtually no difficulties with mis-writing or jitter The BBQ200 also boasts 'Just-Burn Protection' to avoid the dreaded buffer underrun. Another thing in its favour is the price, and at less than £150 it's probably worth the investment if your PC isn't currently blessed with an internal writing drive.

If portability is what you're looking for then this makes for a reliable, cheaper alternative to devices like the Iomega Predator, albeit in a less-sexy physical form. The drive is also dead easy to set up, making it an ideal entry model for first-time CD-RW users. ■

The verdict

Product: Memorex BBQ200
Price: £129.99
Tel: N/A
URL: www.memorexlive.com

Features:	★★★½☆
Ease of use:	★★★★½
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★½

✔ Portable and simple to use

✖ Not the quickest burner around

Labtec AXIS-711

COMMUNICATING VIA THE NET HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER THANKS TO THE LAUNCH OF THIS STYLISH NEW DIGITAL HEADSET

IF YOU REGULARLY loiter around Internet chatrooms then you'll know that the biggest craze these days is voice-chat. Most online chat sites now have a facility for this and it's become a popular way of passing the time of day with strangers without having to frantically bash away on the keyboard.

In fact, the whole area of voice-over-IP is now starting to take off as a viable alternative to using the phone. The rise of freeware programs like Microsoft's Netmeeting has made audio and video conferencing a viable option for everyday Net users as well as corporate schmoozers.

The reason for all the excitement generated by Internet voice networking is that it's a darn sight cheaper talking to someone on the Net for the price of a local call than it is to fork out for national or international telephone rates. As this vocal revolution gathers pace, it's becoming more and more important to equip yourself with the right hardware to get the most from the various services and Labtec's Axis-711 headset is designed to be just the tool you need to enjoy voice-over-IP, Internet gaming, voice chat as well as utilising voice recognition applications.

Wired for sound

The most immediately striking aspect of this headset is the ease in which it can be connected to a PC or Mac via the USB interface. Once wired up it's just a case of tinkering with the your machine's sound input settings before you're ready to start chatting away.

The quality of the sound reproduced by the Axis-711 is excellent, thanks to the digital USB technology employed by Labtec which claims to eliminate 'noise' to produce maximum signal clarity. The microphone itself is attached via a double-coil arm which allows you to position it to suit the contours of your head, ensuring that it can recognise your voice as accurately as possible. The device is comfortable enough and can be adjusted to fit the shape of your head, although it would probably have benefited from a second earpiece in terms of balance. Also, the volume and mute control attached to the device is slightly bulky and takes up more space than it really needs to on your desktop.

Having said this, the headset is far more stylish than most, meaning that you can indulge in voice conversations on the Net without worrying about looking like one of Doctor Who's cybermen. ■

The verdict

Product: Axis-711
Price: £44.99
Tel: 020 7458 0059
URL: www.labtec.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★½
Overall:	★★★★½

✔ Comfortable, delivers excellent sound quality

✖ Volume control mechanism is a bit bulky for our liking

FilmScan 1800

QUICKLY PRODUCE DIGITAL PHOTOS FROM A FILM CAMERA WITH THIS HANDY SCANNER

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY IS now all the rage, and is becoming regarding as one of the coolest ways to spend a weekend.

However, there are purists who swear blind that traditional SLR cameras are still the best tool for anyone who's really serious about photography, as they are able to capture a much sharper shot.

Luckily, SLR junkies can have the best of both worlds by getting hold of a film scanner, which allows you to instantly capture images from film rolls or slides onto your computer where, they can be emailed, uploaded to the Web or simply printed out.

Desktop darkroom

Microtek's latest offering to this market is the FilmScan 1800, which can handle 35mm negatives as well as slides or transparencies. One of the first things that struck us after setting this device up was how much easier it was than fumbling around a dark room using all manner of chemicals, clothes pegs and hairdryers.

The FilmScan's USB connection and easy to use software mean that you can start transferring your film within a matter of minutes, while the auto film loading mechanism means you don't have to fiddle around too much with your slides or negatives. The device can also batch scan up to 40 exposures from a single film roll, meaning that you can quickly reproduce a whole bunch of images all at once.

In terms of image quality, the FilmScan 1800 is pretty much faultless, with a maximum resolution of 1800dpi and its dynamic range of 3.4D, which ensures that both subtle highlights and shadows are captured accurately and colour is reproduced true to life. It also comes bundled with the wonderful Photoshop Elements, allowing you to correct blemishes in your shots and easily prepare images for use online.

Perhaps the main drawback of the FilmScan is its price tag. Costing a shade under £200, it's a slightly high price to pay for reproducing images from film, when you could pick up a fairly decent digital camera for around the same price. Having said this, the device performs its job admirably and makes for a good investment for anyone really serious about film photography that doesn't have the physical space to set up their own home photo developing station or dark room. ■

The verdict

Product: FilmScan 1800
Price: £199.99
Tel: 01327 844880
URL: www.microtekeurope.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★★
Overall:	★★★★★

✔ Easy to operate and delivers excellent performance

✖ Quite an investment for the casual camera hobbyist

e-M@ilerplus

AMSTRAD SERVES UP ITS LATEST PIECE OF INTERNET INNOVATION

ONE OF THE mainstays of the home computing world, Amstrad has been offering budget-priced technology solutions for donkeys' years now and is showing no signs of letting up.

Launched over 18 months ago, the original e-m@iler was released with the intention of 'getting Britain emailing'. A year and half later, and Britain has definitely warmed to email culture, though whether this can be directly attributed to sales of the e-m@iler is somewhat doubtful. Now, keen to keep people emailing, and to introduce them to Web browsing (wow!) Amstrad has released the e-m@iler plus.

In addition to boasting a smart new design, the company has added heaps more features, as well as a £20 price increase. Like the original device, the e-m@ilerplus can be operated by even the most dumb-assed telephone user and we found ourselves rattling off emails within minutes of taking the thing of out of the box. The sturdy keyboard which slides out from beneath the phone's keypad is robust enough to handle even the most frenetic email composing sessions and, despite a low resolution, the monochrome screen is clear enough to read.

Plus points

The device comes stacked with a bevy of new features including the Microsoft Internet Explorer Mobile software which allows you to surf the Web albeit very slowly on anything except the most basic of sites. The em@iler also lets you send SMS text messages to mobiles, a feature which we found very easy to use and a worthwhile addition if you haven't got your own mobile phone yet (if such a person exists). Perhaps our favourite new feature though, is the ability to play old-school arcade games on the device through the Sinclair ZX Spectrum Games Centre (albeit at a cost of 50p per download).

Other costs include a 12 pence fee every time you dial up to collect your email or surf the Web and the cost of the Internet call. Plus, you can also pay around £12 a quarter to enable alerts to let you know when your mail is waiting. All of which, makes for an expensive way of checking your mail and surfing the Web on what is after all just a small, monochrome screen attached to your phone.

So if you need a new phone and fancy something with some bells and whistles, this is a good buy. If you want to send email and browse the Web, stick to a PC. ■

The verdict

Product: e-M@ilerplus
Price: £99
Tel: 01277 228888
URL: www.amstrad.com

Features:	★★★★★
Ease of use:	★★★★★
Value for money:	★★★★★
Overall:	★★★★★

✔ Nice features, simple to use

✖ Pretty pointless if you already own a PC

CD contents

Break down your MP3 tracks with Cool MP3 Splitter

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £21

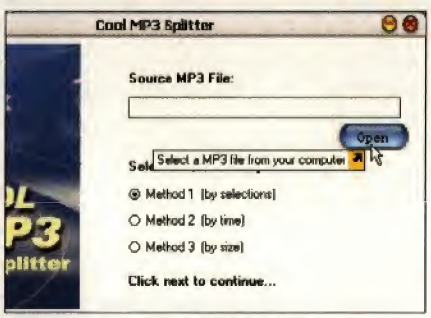
ENHANCE YOUR DIGITAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE WITH THIS FULLY WORKING PIECE OF SOFTWARE

EVER WISHED YOU could tidy up your ultra-long MP3 tracks into smaller chunks? Perhaps, you've recorded a radio program or have a extended mix of some uplifting trance anthems that you'd like to split up. Either way, Cool MP3 Splitter is great for creating one or more sections of a large MP3 file.

There are three methods which you can employ to split your tracks – by section, by time and by size. Whichever you choose to use, you should find it very useful for creating audio CDs from your collection, and you can break up live songs from a recording of a concert you may have into individual tracks. What's more, the Multi-Thread split technology that the software employs ensures that you can achieve the highest possible performance.

In order to put Cool MP3 Splitter into action, you'll be asked to enter a username and password when you first run the program from the cover disc. The username you need is '**Practical Internet**' and the registration code is '**YNKP-NWH9-JQTR**'. You will then need to restart the software before completing the installation.

Split up your MP3s

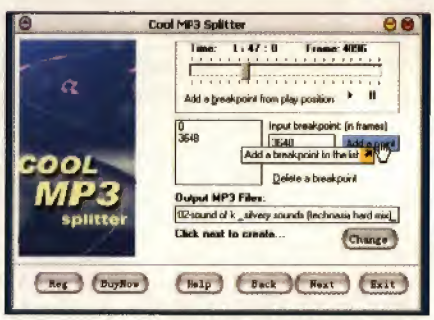


1 Choose a method

Install the program from the cover disc, then select a splitting method. We've chosen 'by selections', which means you can choose exactly where to split a track. Now select 'Open'.

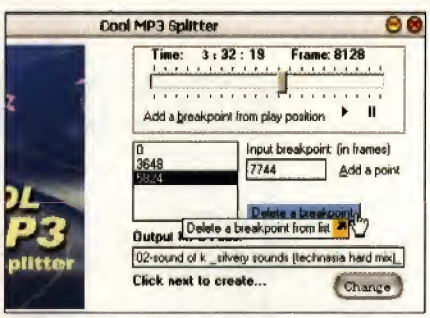
2 Find your file

Browse to the file directory where the file is stored and highlight the track name you wish to break up. Once selected, click 'Open' to start tinkering around with it. Now click 'Next'.



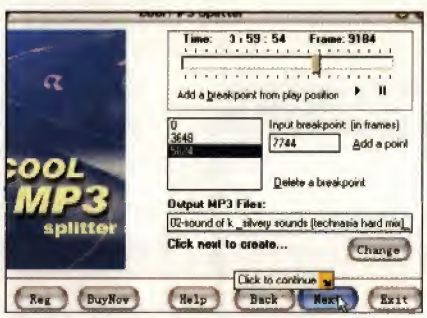
3 Add a breakpoint

Your track will automatically play and you can scan and search it using the slider at the top of the interface. Enter the frame number of the part you wish to break in 'Input breakpoint'.



4 Doing the splits

You can keep adding new breakpoints using this method, with each new track starting on the frame after the breakpoint. Delete breakpoints by highlighting it and clicking 'Delete breakpoint'.



5 Create the new file

Click 'Change' to save the split file to a different location. You can rename it here if you wish to. Once you've selected a location, click 'Next' to complete the splitting process.

6 Your split MP3

Now when you import your MP3 or playlist into a media player, the track you divided will be split at the points you specified. Each section will be treated as a separate track.

Try these

→ **Internet Explorer 6**
Officially the world's most popular Web browser (see page 17), IE is now in it's sixth incarnation and widely regarded as the greatest browser to date.

→ **Netscape 6.2**
With support for skins, integrated searching tools, a built-in messenger and the ability to manage multiple email accounts, Netscape 6.2 belies its traditional status as the poor-man's Internet Explorer.

→ **Opera 6.01**
As IE and Netscape slog it out in the browser wars, Opera has been quietly perfecting a reputation as the quickest, most efficient tool for viewing Web pages. As a result, it sits proudly in the top five of our 101 greatest programs.

Ace HTML 4 Pro

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! RS GOLD FOR £42

FASHION GLORIOUS PAGES WITH THIS POWERFUL HTML EDITOR

ANYONE ON A mission to impress visitors with professional-quality Web pages need look no further than Ace HTML 4 Pro. Despite being crammed with advanced tools, the software is still easy to use and flexible, allowing you to edit HTML tags, JavaScript events and Style Sheet properties in a flash.

The working interface is completely customisable and you can set up Ace HTML to assign mundane, repetitive tasks to shortcut keys to help you work smarter. With support for XML and Perl documents as well as more than 100 predefined DHTML and JavaScripts, the fully working program houses everything you could wish for in an editor.

In order to use Ace HTML Pro 4, you'll need to visit **http://partners.visicommedia.com/en/practical** to obtain a registration code via email. What's more, you can also take advantage of our great special offer where you can upgrade to AceHTML 5 for only $29.95 (around £20).

Firekeys 4.0

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! RS GOLD FOR £26

STAY SAFE AS YOU SURF THANKS TO THIS GREAT FULLY WORKING FIREWALL UTILITY

IN THIS DAY and age, not sorting out some kind of security measures for your PC is about as foolish as leaving your front door wide open when you leave for work. With Net crime still on the increase, you need to defend yourself against scumbags and nerdy hackers that can prey on your machine. Thankfully, Firekeys lets you pull the shutters down by adding a firewall to your machine and blocking the TCP/IP ports. Check out our tutorial on page 61 for more.

To use this fully working software, you'll need to enter the following registration code: **Z061408-629d9e61**.

Tracks Eraser

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! RS SOLUTION £14

KEEP YOUR INTERNET ACTIVITY TO YOURSELF

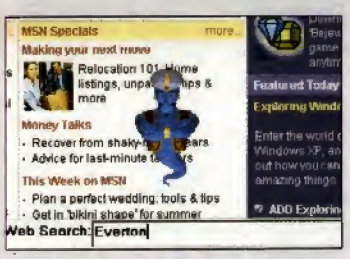
WE ALL KNOW that your PC keeps a record of pretty much everything you do online. This isn't usually a problem but there are times when you may not want other users of your computer to find out where you've been. Although you might think that clearing your browser's History or cache will remove any shred of evidence, it won't, as there are still plenty of ways your activity could be tracked. Worry ye not, though, as this full version software will get rid of any incriminating evidence of Net use quickly and easily, and more importantly, permanently.

To use Tracks Eraser you must first enter the registration code: **44327353e73n** upon loading the program from the disc. Plus you can also try out Tracks Eraser Pro by loading the demo from the CD.

Listen to the Web with Wemedia

PERUSING THE WEB has traditionally been a visual experience. However, as accessibility on the Net improves, it's now possible to listen to spoken Web pages thanks to the development of talking browsers.

One of the best around is the WeMedia browser and its innovative technology sees it feature in our Top 101 feature on pages 22-32. The software lets you visit your favourite site and sit back as it's read aloud to you by a talking blue genie character, who sounds like one of the Smash aliens. If all this sounds like some sort of crazy LCD-induced nightmare, it's actually a great way of making the Web accessible for partially-sighted people, those that can't read or anyone who just fancies a change.



1 Search the Web

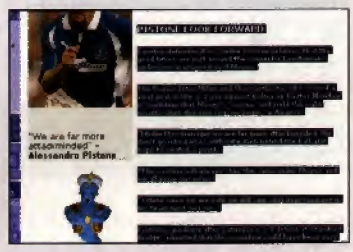
Perform a search for pages of interest by clicking the 'Web Search' box. Enter a search phrase and hit 'Enter'. The genie will read what you type before the search results are displayed.

2 Navigating links

To get the search results read to you, click in the 'Page Map' window. You move through the links using the up and down cursor keys. The sites' names and descriptions will be read aloud.

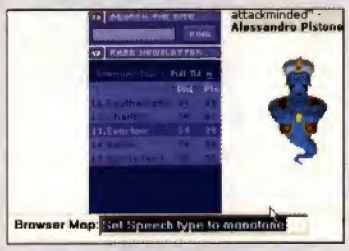
3 Listen to the page

Click 'Enter' to view a site. You'll be taken to the relevant page and the name will be read aloud. Click the 'Start Speak' button and the site's text will be read back to you. Click Alt-Q for silence.



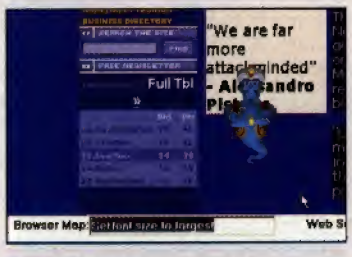
4 Selective listening

If you don't want to listen to every single word, you can highlight a selected section of text. Now press the 'Speak Selected' button, or use the Alt-L hotkey to listen.



5 The Browser Map

You can access the various features using the 'Browser Map'. Click in the Browser Map box and use the cursor keys to scroll through options. We've changed the speech type.



6 Customise it

Speed up or slow down the voice by scrolling through the appropriate options in the Browser Map. Here, you can also personalise the browser.

→

CD Contents

CD highlights

Media superstars

ENJOY MUSIC AND VIDEO AT ITS BEST WITH OUR COLLECTION OF TASTY MEDIA PLAYERS IN OUR TOP 101

WinAmp 2.78

Freeware, 1.1Mb

The delightful WinAmp is so good you could almost eat it, although we wouldn't recommend it as it's a piece of Freeware, not a cake. The audio player is head and shoulders above any other with its awesome range of features, skinability and the vast amount of plug-ins you can apply to it in order to crank up the performance. It supports a wide range of popular formats but remarkably, manages to just take up 1.1Mb of space.

Spinner

Freeware, 1.75Mb

Listening to the radio has changed a fair bit since the days when the family would huddle round the wireless checking out the shipping forecast. These days, it's all about listening to exactly what you want instead of sitting through hours of dross just to hear one song that you like. Spinner lets you tune into Internet radio by selecting a particular 'channel' based on your own music tastes, so you only ever hear stuff that you're in to.

DivX

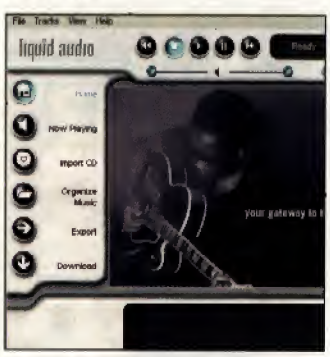
Freeware, 2.61Mb

Supporting playback of one of the hottest video formats around, this piece of kit lets you soak up DivX movies in style, as well as giving you the power to create your own video. The software boasts enhanced video quality, effective compression facilities and full support for the MPEG-4 Advanced Simple Profile decoding method.

Sonique 1.95

Freeware, 2.66Mb

If you're looking for something slightly sexier than Windows Media Player to help you belt out your music collection, look no further than the gorgeous Sonique. The program features a trendy windowless interface that comes complete with a fully animated menu system. Sonique is capable of handling MP3, Windows Media audio, and also CDs. It also boasts support for skins and plug-ins plus visualisation modes allowing you to freak out in front of your favourite tunes.



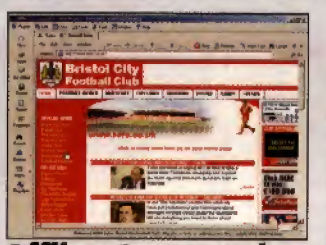
Liquid Player 6.1

Freeware, 13.2Mb

Much more than just a media player, Liquid Player gives you the power to stream, download, playback, rip and burn audio CDs in one neatly packaged piece of software. The program also boasts a digital music organiser and playlist manager for whipping your musical morsels into line, and what's more, it supports a whole host of different formats.

Beef up your browser

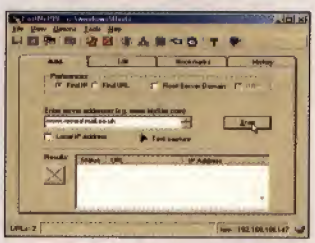
PERFECT THE ART OF WEB BROWSING WITH THESE UTILITIES INCLUDED IN OUR 'TOP 101' FEATURE



Offline Commander

Shareware, 4Mb

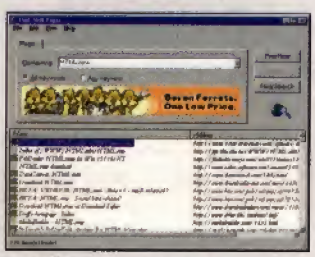
If you're still paying for your Internet calls, you'd be a fool not to make use of an offline browser. Offline Commander is arguably the best in the business, allowing you to download and organise Web pages for viewing offline, thus leaving you free to browse the site at your leisure without having to worry about paying the price. The program lets you quickly search downloaded Web sites for keywords using built-in full-text indexing and view the directory structure of a Web site and its site map.



FastNet Connection Accelerator ME 1.6

Shareware, 678Kb

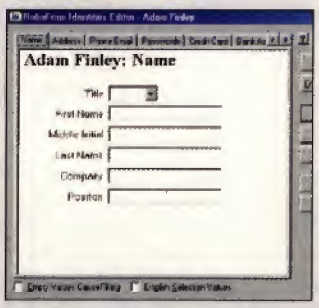
Unless you've been shrewd enough to upgrade your connection to broadband, you'll probably want to squeeze every last drop of performance from your modem. This cunning application accelerates your Net connection speed by allowing you to easily optimise your Windows settings for supersonic browsing.



Web Ferret 4.0

Freeware, 560Kb

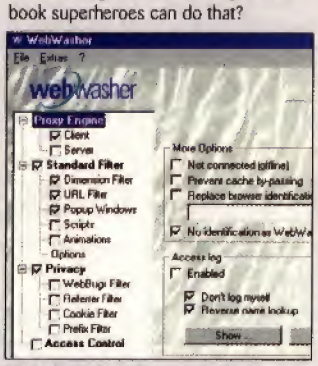
Trawling for information on the Web can be a pretty thankless task if you really want to be meticulous about it. Luckily, this tidy piece of software can help you quickly tease out all the facts you need about a particular keyword by querying multiple search engines at the same time. You can even validate selected results, save your search history, and filter out pornography and foul language.



AI Roboform 4.3.3

Freeware, 695Kb

While its name may suggest that this is some sort of scary-assed mutant from the next *X-men* film, AI Roboform is, in reality, an innocent online forms manager. Once you've entered your personal details using the Start-up wizard, you can complete any Web site forms at the touch of a button on your browser's toolbar. What's more, the program even memorizes and fills in site passwords, saving you hours of brain-racking. Now, how many comic book superheroes can do that?



WebWasher 2.21

Freeware, 993Kb

Make sure you get your Web pages whiter than white, with this awesome ad-cleaning software. WebWasher can automatically eradicate any unwanted adverts, which actually make up 30 to 40 per cent of the data you download from the Internet. As a result, you can easily free up valuable bandwidth, leaving you with a quicker, smoother browsing experience.

On this month's CD

The 101 Best 101 Net Programs

- WinAmp 2.78
  For full functionality requires IE4 or higher
- Yahoo! Messenger 5.0
- KaZaA 1.5
- Opera 6.01
- AudioGalaxy
- Eudora 5.1
- ICQ 2001b
  Requires Common Controls update
- ZoneAlarm
- CoffeeCup Free HTML
- Cdex 1.30
- NeoPlanet
- WinZip 8.1
- iTunes (Mac only)
- Copernic 2001 5.02
- TweakIE
- Internet Rocket
- Spinner 4.0
- WS_FTP LE
- The GIMP
- Trillian 0.725
- Xteq 6.01
- Irfan View 3.61
- VCatch Virus Catcher
- MAME
- Internet Explorer 6
- Aladdin DropStuff (Mac only)
- Web Washer 2.2.1
- Kaleidoscope (Mac only)
- Internet Explorer Eye Spy 2.41
- Star Downloader
- StartSurfing
- Download Accelerator 5
- Graphic Converter 4.3 (Mac only)
- FTP Voyager 9.01
- AI Roboform 4.3.7
- AOL Instant Messenger
- Spam Buster 1.9
- WebFerret 4.0
- Netscape 6.2
- Sonique 1.95
- LimeWire 2.3.1
- Offline Explorer Pro
- StreamRipper32 2.4a
- Girafa
- Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.05
- Boss Key 1.0
- Stuffit Expander (Mac only)
- Liquid Player
- iMesh
- GoZilla 4.11
- WinMX 2.6
- 1st Page 2002 2.0
- Ad aware 5.62
- FastNet Connection Accelerator MF 1.6
- Crime Catcher 1.0
- Leech FTP
- Kmeleon 0.6
- Chameleon 1.1
- 20/20 2.2
- Audacity 0.98
- Morpheus Preview Edition
- CUseeMe 5.0
- Alligator 1.32
- Easy Password Manager 1.17
- Arachnophilia 4.0
- StartPage Guard 1.2
- JoMail 2.7
- RAMbooster 1.6
- AI Picture Utility 6.0
- Cache Decimator 3.0
- Free Agent 1.21
- TagScanner 4.5
- Shockwave/Flash Player
- GetRight 4.5
- Wemedia Talking Browser 1.0
- Tinker Tool 2.0.1 (Mac only)
- Is My Mate Cheating Online
- Browser Pro 1.0
- WebMus 1.0
- MovieXOne 4.0
- SANDRA Standard 8.1
- Jcab (Mac only)
- Offline Commander 1.5
- HVS Animator 1.0.2
- Applet Marquee Wizard
- QuickSMS 1.0
- HideWin 1.0
- Object Bar 1.0
- CleanDisk 2.6
- FreeDVD
- Eyeball Chat 2.0
- Connection Keeper 5.0
- DivX Video Bundle 5.0
- Smart Butler 1.11
- HTML Optimizer
- Submitta
- ImageX
- RealPlayer 8 Basic

Full Products

- Ace HTML 4 Pro
  Requires Internet connection. Not supported for Windows XP
- Cool MP3 Splitter 1.1
- Firekeys 4.0
- Tracks Eraser 3.05

ISP

- Tiscali

System

- Lame dll file
- Common Controls update
- DirectX 8.1
- Visual Basic 5
- Visual Basic 6 RunTime
- TrustToolbar

Workshops

- Ace HTML 4 Pro
  Full Version
- Ace HTML 5 Pro
  Trial
- CoffeeCup Password Wizard 4
  Shareware
- Crossfading Output for Winamp 1.0
  Freeware
- DFX for Winamp 4.3
  Trial
- Firekeys 4.0
  Full version
- Firekeys 5.0
  Trial
- FTP Voyager 9.0.0.1
  Shareware
- HotLine Client 1.8.5
  Freeware
- HotLine Server 1.8.5
  Freeware
- IrfanView 3.61
  Freeware
- Leech FTP
  Freeware
- Mailto Obfuscator 1.0
  Freeware
- NeoPlanet 5.2
  Freeware
- Opera 6.01
  Freeware
- PureLyrics Winamp Plug-in 1.0
  Freeware
- Spam Buster 1.9
  Freeware
- Speedway
  Freeware
- Spy Blocker 5
  Freeware
- StartPage Guard 1.2
  Freeware
- Tracks Eraser 3.05
  Full version
- Tracks Eraser Pro 1.02
  Trial
- Winamp 2.78
  Freeware
- Winamp Hotkeys Plug-in 1.1
  Freeware

Mac Software

- iTunes
- Aladdin DropStuff
- Kaleidoscope
- Graphic Converter 4.3
- Stuffit Expander
- Tinker Tool 2.0.1

Browsing aids

- Aladdin Stuffit Lite
- Interarchy
- Download Deputy Turbo
- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Netscape

Audio visual

- QuickTime
- SoundApp
- Windows Media Player 7.1

Email Utilities

- Eudora 5.1

Chat Software

- ICQ 3.0

Net Security

- Cookie Commander

E-Business

- LiveData Lite
- FileMaker Pro
- Ch-ching

Web Graphics

- HyperColor Scheme
- PhotoSite TimeSaviour
- Color Picker Pro
- HTML ColorChooser

Site Building Tools

- BBEdit – 6.5
- Freeway
- Dreamweaver 4
- Dreamweaver update
- HTML-Optimizer

How to use this month's free CD

THE MINIMUM RECOMMENDED specification to run the *Practical Internet* CD is 800 X 600 screen resolution, 32Mb RAM, 16 bit colour, Windows 95/98/ME, Intel Pentium or compatible P166. We recommend that all users shut down all other applications while running the CD.

The CD will autorun in Windows 95/98. For users without autorun enabled go to the start menu, select RUN and then type d:\PracticalInternet.exe (replacing 'd' with the letter of your CD drive) and press 'Return'.

Damaged discs

We will be please to replace any CD that is cracked, scratched or snapped upon purchase. Return them to the following address: Cover Disc Returns, Paragon Publishing, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS. If you experience technical problems, not due to physical damage on the CD, please DO NOT return any discs to us unless requested by the support team.

Missing discs

If you have purchased the magazine and have not received your CD, we will be happy to send you out a replacement disc. Email **subs@paragon.co.uk** quoting the magazine and issue number, full postal address and daytime phone number.

Problems using the disc

If you encounter problems using the CD or installing the software you can email **cdhelp@paragon.co.uk**. Questions will be answered twice daily.

Please provide us with as much information about the technical specifications of your machine and the software errors you are receiving as well as quoting the magazine and issue number in your email.

Our helpdesk team will be taking calls about disc installation problems on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 6pm. Phone 01202 200259.

NOTE: This service can only deal with problems when installing software from our CDs. Issues surrounding the use and purchase of software and all ISP queries must be referred to the relevant software publisher, merchant or ISP. Please note that we do not support Windows 3.1/ Windows 95/ Windows NT or Windows 2000 operating systems.

The CD logo

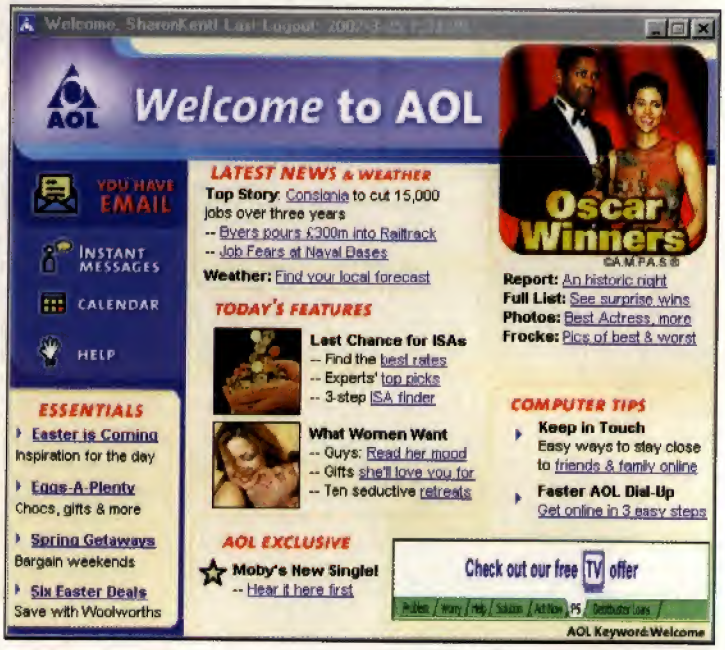
Look out for this logo in the magazine. It tells you which of the programs mentioned in features, or explored in tutorials, are on the *Practical Internet* cover CD-ROM.

NEW VERSION AOL 7.0

Try AOL's completely FREE* 100 hour Internet trial

AOL IS OFFERING YOU A COMPLETELY FREE* 100 HOUR INTERNET TRIAL WITH NO INTERNET PHONE BILL OR MEMBERSHIP FEE FOR YOUR FIRST MONTH ONLINE. AOL IS A FUN, AFFORDABLE, EASY-TO-USE INTERACTIVE INFORMATION SERVICE COVERING EVERYTHING FROM NEWS AND SPORT TO TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT – TRY AOL TODAY AND SEE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN MISSING

Service provider:	AOL
Free time:	100 hours
Modem speeds:	Up to 56k
Technical support:	0800 376 5432
Dial URL:	www.aol.co.uk
Monthly rate:	£14.99
Platforms:	Windows 95, 98, Millennium Edition, 2000 Professional, XP

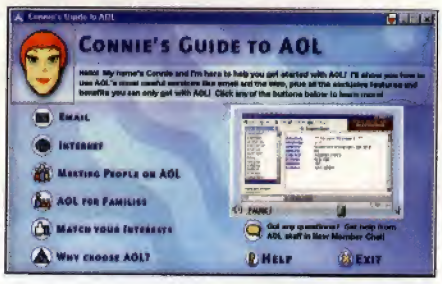


AOL version 7.0

When you sign up for your free* trial using your AOL cover CD, you will be using the latest version of software, AOL 7.0. This new software is packed with new and improved features to help you get even more from the world's number one Internet service. For instance, there's a new toolbar that's easier to use, new channels with enhanced content, improved Help to answer all your questions and an improved media player to play your CDs and Videos.

Finding your way around

You can become an AOL expert in just a few minutes by taking a tour with Connie, AOL's Internet genie who'll help you to get the most out of your Internet experience. Connie's new Member guide contains everything you need to know from setting up your email accounts and using the Internet to making the most of the exclusive benefits you only get with AOL.



As well as Connie, AOL has 250 hosts and guides – a team of trained volunteers who offer you help and guidance and enforce rules of decency in chat rooms and on message boards.

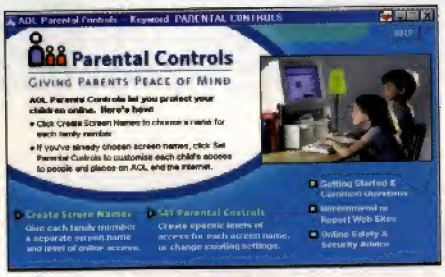
Fast communication

Keep in contact with your family, friends and work colleagues with email and Instant Messages. You can set up seven email addresses on your account – each member of the family can enjoy individual email access. AOL lets you send multiple files and even customise emails with personal signatures. As well as being able to personalise emails, AOL allows you to access saved emails easily by filing them by type, date, email address or subject.

And, with our Instant Messages, you can have a one-to-one conversation with your friends in real time. Your personal Buddy List will let you know when friends, family and colleagues are online. You can also set up a customised away message that you can switch on if you are away from your desk or don't want to be disturbed.

Exclusive content

Take a look at our 22 expanded AOL channels and you will find an extensive range of unique content including Sports, Shopping, Financial information and Health. You can find these Channels by clicking on the channel bar at the top left of your screen when you sign on to AOL. It's really that simple. All of these channels combine the best of the World Wide Web with writers, resources and tools commissioned especially by AOL, and all underpinned by our world-famous chat rooms and message boards where you can swap advice and gossip with other people just like you. All in one easy-to-use package.



Parental Controls

Not only do we provide a whole channel devoted to Kids including News, Games and Chat, we also provide you with Parental Controls. This means you can decide what your kids get to see, whether it's our special areas for Kids Only, Young Teens or Mature Teens or let them access all of the Web. AOL helps you keep your kids safe while they are online.

Access the service directly via a prominent icon on the Toolbar called Parental Controls.

Shop 'til you drop

Shop in the comfort of your own home! AOL has a great selection of online stores to suit everyone - whether you're looking for a treat for yourself or a gift for someone special. If you've never shopped online before don't worry - AOL's First Time Buyers area will take you through the whole process step-by-step.

All the sites on Shop@AOL adhere to strict security and customer service standards. The AOL Promise has been designed to protect all aspects of the Shop@AOL experience. For example, all of the featured shops on Shop@AOL protect your credit card details by encrypting them.

Some of AOL's unique benefits include:

- Flat Rate* Internet Access
- Completely FREE* 100 hour Internet trial
- Exciting new features with AOL Version 7.0
- 7 email addresses
- Instant Messaging
- 22 exclusive channels
- Parental Controls
- Plus 33 million members Worldwide

Plus FREE Member and Technical Help
Whether you have technical problems or have a query with your account we are here for you. Call us on our FREEPHONE Member helpline 7 days a week - **0800 376 5432**

The Internet can be a confusing place so make things easier for yourself – Sign onto AOL by using your cover CD for your FREE* trial today!

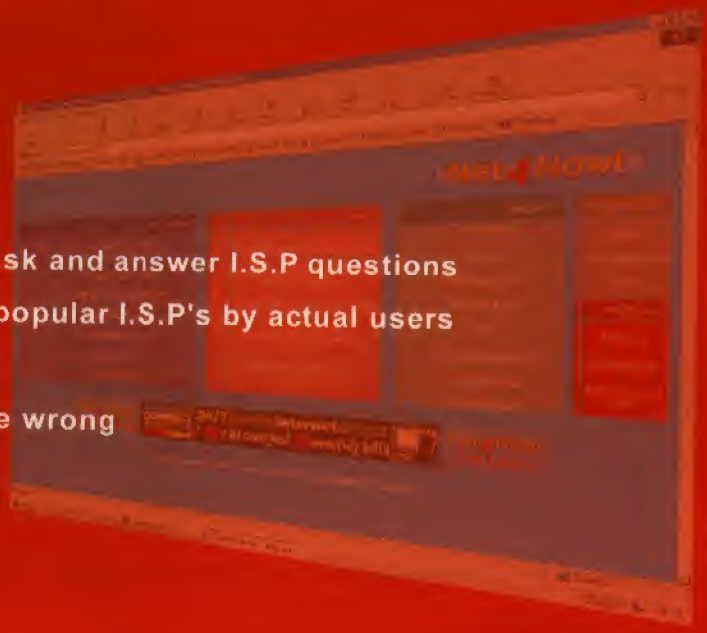
*Your 100 hour FREE trial offer requires credit card details and must be used within your first month online. Subsequent charges apply after your first month online. Offer may vary. Call free on **0800 376 5432** or see online for further information.

Need a new Internet Service Provider?

Let Net4nowt help.

- Over 300 I.S.P's Listed
- Latest I.S.P News Stories
- Active Discussion Group to ask and answer I.S.P questions
- Reviews and star ratings on popular I.S.P's by actual users

Over 4,000 users a day can't be wrong



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Info@net4nowt.com

Net4Nowt

>MagicalSoupdotcom

Dirt Cheap Domain Names > No hidden costs.

.co.uk £15
.com £40
.net £40
.org £40
.uk.com £80
>All inclusive for 2 Years

Free Magical Xtras
>Web Forwarding
>Email Forwarding
>Change Name Servers
>Change IPS TAG (UK Domains)
>No Release Fees
>Secure Credit Card Payment
>Domain Registered in your name
>Email support

No hidden costs > We recommend you look into buying your domain name carefully. Loads of companies advertise domains at prices too good to be true, because they are. You'll need to look into how much it'll cost you for NIC fees, transfer fees, domain parking and then add VAT. MagicalSoup prices are fully inclusive, the price you see is the price you pay.

>Come have a look at www.magicalsoup.com

Get online with Tiscali

AS MOST PEOPLE KNOW, THE INTERNET IS THE GATEWAY TO A WORLD OF MUSIC, ENTERTAINMENT, NEWS AND INFORMATION AND PROVIDES A VITAL COMMUNICATION MEDIUM – BUT WHICH INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER OFFERS YOU THE BEST VALUE FOR YOUR TIME ONLINE?

Europe's leading ISP

Over three million people in the UK alone have already chosen Tiscali.

Tiscali recently launched in the UK and its determination to provide the very best Internet service to its customers has already established it as Europe's leading Internet service provider. So, what makes Tiscali so popular?

Fast and reliable

For a start, its members enjoy consistently fast and reliable Internet access with industry research having rated Tiscali amongst the fastest service providers.

Great value packages

Tiscali also offers a wide choice of money-saving Internet call packages to suit everyone, regardless of how much or little you use the Internet. These include Tiscali Classic – a no monthly fees package where you just pay local phone rates for the time you are online.

There's also the all-inclusive packages which let you use the Internet at times that suit you for a fixed monthly fee with no additional call charges.

Find what you want – fast

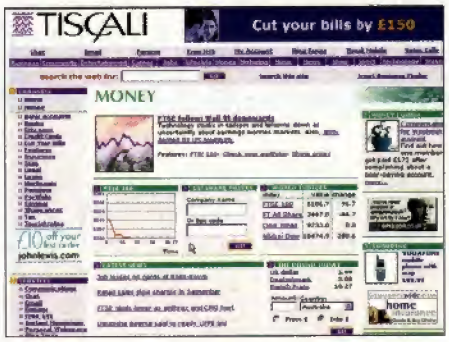
Whichever package you choose to take up, you'll find that Tiscali has been designed to make finding what you want from the Internet as quick and easy as possible. Tiscali has organised its information into fifteen "Channels" such as Entertainment, Motoring, Shopping and Travel - each packed with the latest news, information, offers and links to other relevant Web pages.

You can also get straight to the information you want using the powerful Search feature – and enjoy even greater control with Tiscali's Advanced Search which allows you to filter your options further by date, country, language and more!

Everything you need to communicate!

In the Tiscali Communication Channel you'll find everything you need to communicate over the Internet in one easy-to-use area.

As a member you get five free email addresses and because the email service is



Web-based you can access your email from any Internet connected PC!

Even faster than email, Tiscali's Instant Messenger is the best way to chat online instantly with friends and colleagues over the Internet. Its powerful features let you see at a glance who is online and exchange messages in an instant! You can even send Web page links and attachments to your recipients' desktop, making this a real alternative to email.

Tiscali provides plenty of other ways to communicate over the Net, including discussion forums, chat rooms, even a text messaging service which lets you send up to 10 FREE text messages a day from your PC to any UK mobile phone.

Buyers' guide

A comprehensive resource covering Internet service providers and the very best Net software and hardware. Compare them all at a glance...

Using this guide

BUYING NEW HARDWARE and software for your PC or Mac can be a tricky task. You often have to choose between products which cost the same price and seem to offer identical features. What's more, high street shops encourage you to spend a little more on buying higher spec products than you really need.

This is why *Practical Internet*'s Buyers' Guide is so useful. It's been written with everyday Net users like you in mind and only includes the products and services which we think are genuinely worth buying.

Buy with confidence

The information here is updated every month, but please note that prices and features do sometimes change before we can amend them on these pages – so it's best to check with the supplier before buying.

Look out for our cherished Best Buy logo (below) which is only awarded to the best quality products around.

Practical internet
BEST BUY ★★★★★

Which ISP?

With thousands of ISPs all offering great-looking deals, it's tough to find the right service. This guide helps decide which is best for you

UNMETERED INTERNET PROVIDERS

NEVER SPEND MONEY ON YOUR INTERNET PHONE CALLS AGAIN WITH THESE UNMETERED ISPS. (COSTS ARE MONTHLY)

NAME AND URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQUIRED	UNMETERED AVAILABILITY	EMAIL	WEB SPACE MB	SUPPORT COSTS
24-7Freecall							
http://www.24-7freecall.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	7	10	National Rate
4theNet Unlimited							
http://www.4thenet.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
Abel DIAL Anytime							
http://www.abel.co.uk	£27.99	Unknown	Unknown	24 Hours	999	50	Premium - 25p
Abel DIAL Leisuretime							
http://www.abel.co.uk	£11.99	Unknown	Unknown	General Off-Peak	999	50	Premium - 25p
Affinity							
http://www.affinity.uk.com/surftime.htm	£25.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
Affinity							
http://www.affinity.uk.com/surftime.htm	£9.99	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	15	10	Premium - 50p
AOL							
http://www.aol.co.uk	£15.99	No	No	24 Hours	7	14	Free
Asian Biz HomeTime							
http://www.asian-biz.net	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
blueyonder SurfUnlimited							
http://www.blueyonder.co.uk	£10.00	No	No	24 Hours	15	30	Free
Breathe At Home							
http://www.breathe.com	£8.99	Yes	Yes	16:00 - 08:00 Monday to Friday - all w/e	5	10	Premium - 50p
Breathe Unlimited							
http://www.breathe.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	5	10	Premium - 50p
BT Connect							
http://www.btclickforbusiness.com	£31.74	No	Yes	24 Hours	20	20	Local Rate
BT Connect Lite							
http://www.btclickforbusiness.com	£10.69	Yes	Yes	General Off-Peak	20	20	Premium - 50p
BTopenworld Anytime							
http://www.btopenworld.com	£15.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	10	50	Premium - 50p
Chalkface Anytime							
http://www.chalkface.net	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
CharityDAYS Donate Surf Lite							
http://www.charitydays.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
CharityDAYS Donate Surf Standard							
http://www.charitydays.net	£16.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
ClaraNET FreeTime AnyTime							
http://www.clara.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	50	Local Rate

Seven steps to pick your ideal Internet service provider

1 Choose your ISP type

UNMETERED ISPS make a monthly subscription charge, but you are not billed for any Net phone charges.

FREE ISPS don't charge monthly subscription rates, but you pay local phone rates when online.

PAY ISPS make a monthly subscription charge. You also pay local phone rates when online. They are generally faster and more reliable, though.

2 Is FRIACO for me?

FRIACO (or Flat Rate Internet Access Call Origination) is a form of wholesale Net access that costs ISPs 60-80% less than before. FRIACO ISPs are usually more financially stable and reliable than their troubled freephone predecessors.

3 Getting speedy help

If you're new to the Internet, you will make lots of calls to the ISP's telephone helpline – so pick one with low-cost support.

4 Enjoy Net gaming?

If you're a keen online game player, a dedicated fast service provider is absolutely essential. GamesWorld (**www.games-world.net**) is one of several services that supports Quake, for example.

5 No Windows? No probs!

Freeserve, BT Click and Demon work well with Linux, while Mac users should consider Madasafish, Demon, AOL or AbelGratis.

6 Building a Web site?

If you want to build a Web site, check an ISP offers free Web space. Some provide unlimited space (though 10Mb should be ample) while others offer free domain names.

7 Get global email

If your Internet service provider offers a Webmail service you'll be able to access your email from anywhere in the world through a Web browser. This is handy for travellers and business people. Having said that, many travellers get by with a third-party Web mail service like Hotmail, as this also lets you send and receive email via any Net-connected computer around the world.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com
Net 4 Nowt

NAME AND URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQUIRED	UNMETERED AVAILABILITY	EMAIL	WEB SPACE MB	SUPPORT COSTS
ClaraNET Freetime Anytime Business							
http://www.clara.net	£24.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	999	50	Local Rate
EcosseTel B-Com Xtra							
http://www.ecossetel.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	50	Premium - 75p
EcosseTel Vroom 2 - Off peak							
http://www.ecossetel.net	£0.00	Yes	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	0	Premium - 75p
EcosseTel Vroom2							
http://www.ecossetel.net	£0.00	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	0	Premium - 75p
Fast24 Alltime							
http://www.fast24.co.uk	£13.25	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	20	10	Premium - 50p
Fast24 Anytime							
http://www.fast24.co.uk	£8.25	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	20	10	Premium - 50p
Fast24 Daytime							
http://www.fast24.co.uk	£10.75	Yes	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	20	10	Premium - 50p
Fast24 Off Peak							
http://www.fast24.co.uk	£5.83	Yes	Yes	General Off-Peak	20	10	Premium - 50p
Fasthosts FreeCall Business							
http://dial.fasthosts.co.uk	£35.19	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	200	Standard BT
Fasthosts FreeCall Home							
http://dial.fasthosts.co.uk	£17.61	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	200	Standard BT
Firenet Anytime							
http://www.firenet.uk.net	£10.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
Firenet Anytime Plus							
http://www.firenet.uk.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
Force9 Connect Always On (Business)							
http://www.force9.co.uk	£119.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
Force9 Connect Biz							
http://www.force9.co.uk	£39.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
Force9 Connect Standard							
http://www.force9.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Free24-7							
http://www.free24-7.net	£7.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	0	0	National Rate
Freedom2Surf Anytime							
http://www.freedom2surf.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	20	Standard BT
Freedom2Surf Unlimited							
http://www.freedom2surf.net	£96.37	No	Yes	24 Hours	999	25	Standard BT
Freedom2Surf Unlimited							
http://www.freedom2surf.net	£15.39	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	25	Standard BT
Free-Online Connect Always On							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£99.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Always On (Business)							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£119.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Biz							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£39.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect BizLite							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£19.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Heavy							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£29.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Lite							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£6.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Free-Online Connect Standard							
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Freeserve Anytime							
http://www.freeserve.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	15	Premium - 50p
Freeserve HomeTime							
http://www.freeserve.com	£10.99	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	15	Premium - 50p
Games World							
http://www.games-world.net	£19.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	999	20	National Rate
Hull24 Business User 24							
http://www.hull24.com	£23.49	No	Yes	24 Hours	5	0	Premium - 50p
Hull24 Home User 24							
http://www.hull24.com	£12.99	No	Yes	24 Hours	5	0	Premium - 50p
Jings							
http://www.jings.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	1	10	National Rate
Kingston AnyTime							
http://www.kcltd.co.uk	£29.99	Unknown	Yes	24 Hours	999	20	Premium - 60p
Kingston FreeTime							
http://www.kcltd.co.uk	£9.99	Unknown	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	20	Premium - 60p
Madasafish							
http://www.madasafish.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	1	10	Premium - 25p
NildramSurftime							
http://www.getsurftime.co.uk	£17.74	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	25	Standard BT
NildramSurftimePlus							
http://www.getsurftime.co.uk	£43.49	No	Yes	24 Hours	999	25	Standard BT
nStream							
http://www.nstream.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	5	25	Standard BT
OneTel							
http://www.onetel.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	3	10	Premium - 50p
PlusNet Connect Always On							
http://www.plus.net	£99.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Biz							
http://www.plus.net	£39.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Biz Always On							
http://www.plus.net	£119.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Biz Lite							
http://www.plus.net	£19.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	500	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Heavy User							
http://www.plus.net	£29.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Lite User							
http://www.plus.net	£6.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Standard							
http://www.plus.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	250	Local Rate
Powergen Anytime							
http://www.pgen.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	5	10	National Rate
Powergen Daytime							
http://www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	06:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	5	10	National Rate

TOP BUYS

Web site builders

Dreamweaver 4

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

£299+VAT
www.macromedia.com
What's good? Arguably the most solid Web authoring package
What's bad? The price. More than £300 for a copy is likely to deter all but the most serious amateur Web builders
Telephone: 0800 8358 5857
Verdict: ★★★★★

Adobe GoLive 5

£229
www.adobe.com
What's good? Vastly impressive range of features. Easy to pick up and use from the box.
What's bad? Not cheap. Still unlikely to win over Dreamweaver die-hards
Telephone: 020 8606 4000
Verdict: ★★★★

HoTMetaL Pro 6

£79
www.hotmetalpro.com
What's good? Inexpensive program with expensive-looking features
What's bad? The integration of HTML coding might bamboozle beginners
Telephone: 020 8387 4110
Verdict: ★★★★

Flash 5

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

£299+VAT
www.macromedia.com
What's good? Allows you to create stunning interactive animations. Great for beginners and experts alike
What's bad? Can be somewhat fiddly at first
Telephone: 0800 8358 5857
Verdict: ★★★★★

Buyers' guide

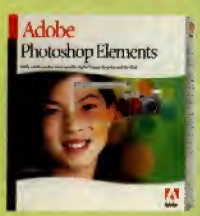
Which ISP?

TOP BUYS

Web image editors

Photo Impact 7

£89.00
www.ulead.co.uk
What's good? Extremely comprehensive graphics package for the price
What's bad? It's not Photoshop
Email: info@ulead.de
Verdict: ★★★★★



Adobe Photoshop Elements

£79
www.adobe.com
What's good? The greatest graphics program on the go. Cheap too!
What's bad? This is an excellent all-round package suitable for all levels of PC user, but it lacks professional publishing tools
Telephone: 020 8606 4000
Verdict: ★★★★★

Fireworks 4

£139
www.macromedia.com
What's good? Very tasty at helping you make animated GIFs for menus and general Web design
What's bad? It's a tad pricey and overpowering for the beginner
Telephone: 020 8358 5857
Verdict: ★★★★

JASC Paint Shop Pro 7 AE

£79+VAT
www.digitalworkshop.co.uk
What's good? Cheap, intuitive and easy to use. A dream for those new to the world of graphics
What's bad? Doesn't offer the same depth of features as Adobe's Photoshop
Telephone: 01295 258335
Verdict: ★★★★★

NAME AND URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQUIRED	UNMETERED AVAILABILITY	EMAIL	WEB SPACE MB	SUPPORT COSTS
Powergen Evenings & Weekends							
http://www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	16:00 - 08:00 Monday to Friday + all w/e	5	10	National Rate
Silvermead Unlimited @ Home							
http://www.silvermead.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
Silvermead Unlimited @ Work							
http://www.silvermead.net	£12.91	Yes	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	15	10	Premium - 50p
SniffOut DreamTime							
http://www.sniffout.net	£19.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	999	Local Rate
SniffOut PeakTime							
http://www.sniffout.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	999	999	Local Rate
Tiscali Daytime							
http://www.tiscali.co.uk	£9.99	No	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	999	50	Premium - 50p
Tiscali Offpeak							
http://www.tiscali.co.uk	£9.99	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	50	Premium - 50p
Tiscali Unlimited							
http://www.tiscali.co.uk	£14.99	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	25	Premium - 50p
TotalServe Ultimate Express							
http://www.totalserve.co.uk	£2.34	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	999	Premium - 50p
TotalServe UltimateSurf 24/7							
http://www.totalserve.co.uk	£12.97	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	999	Premium - 50p
TotalServe UltimateSurf Day (multi)							
http://www.totalserve.co.uk	£35.24	Yes	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	999	999	Premium - 50p
TotalServe UltimateSurf Day (single)							
http://www.totalserve.co.uk	£29.37	Yes	Yes	08:00 - 18:00 Monday to Friday	999	999	Premium - 50p
Totalserve UltimateSurf Lite							
http://www.totalserve.co.uk	£8.22	Yes	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	999	Premium - 50p
UKStamp Business							
http://www.ukstamp.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	999	Standard BT
UKStamp Residential							
http://www.ukstamp.co.uk	£8.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	0	N/A
V21							
http://www.v21.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	999	Premium - £1.00
Virgin.net 24seven							
http://www.virgin.net	£15.00	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	5	10	Premium - £1.00
Vispa Connect Anytime							
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk	£14.95	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	15	Local Rate
Vispa Connect Hometime Lite							
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk	£12.98	No	Yes	General Off Peak	999	15	Local Rate
Vispa Connect Hometime Plus							
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk	£34.98	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	15	Local Rate
Vizzavi							
http://www.vizzavi.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	999	0	Premium - 50p
WHSmithnet Flat Rate							
http://www.whsmith.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	24 Hours	15	10	Premium - 50p
WHSmithnet Off Peak							
http://www.whsmith.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	16:00 - 08:00 Monday to Friday + all w/e	15	10	Premium - 50p
Zetnet off-peak							
http://www.zetnet.co.uk	£15.99	No	Yes	General Off-Peak	999	25	National Rate

BROADBAND AND ADSL SERVICES

GET SUPER-FAST, ALWAYS-ON NET ACCESS FROM THESE BROADBAND SERVICE PROVIDERS. COSTS SHOWN ARE MONTHLY

NAME AND URL	TYPE OF ACCESS	MONTHLY FEE	SET UP COST	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	NEWSGROUPS
Abel Always USB						
http://www.ablealways.co.uk	ADSL	£49.94	£88.13	999	50	Yes
Andrews & Arnold (consumer) 512Kbps						
http://www.aa.nu	ADSL	£76.38	£235.00	999	999	Yes
AppleOnline (business) 0512Kbps						
http://www.appleonline.net	ADSL	£155.00	£260.00	999	25	Yes
AppleOnline (consumer)						
http://www.appleonline.net	ADSL	£40.00	£150.00	999	25	Yes
Beyond Access						
http://www.beyondaccess.co.uk	ADSL	£0.00	£305.50	999	100	Yes
BTopenworld Plug and Go						
http://www.btopenworld.com	ADSL	£39.99	£58.75	10	20	Yes
CharityDAYS Donate ADSL Home						
http://www.charitydays.net	ADSL	£49.99	£88.00	999	250	Yes
ClaraDSL Solo						
http://www.clara.net	ADSL	£49.99	£176.25	999	50	Yes
Demon Express						
http://www.demon.net	ADSL	£49.99	£150.00	999	20	Yes
Demon Express Gold						
http://www.demon.net	ADSL	£340.75	£293.75	999	50	Yes
Demon Express Plus						
http://www.demon.net	ADSL	£111.63	£293.75	999	20	Yes
Demon Express Pro						
http://www.demon.net	ADSL	£205.63	£293.75	999	20	Yes
Easynet DSL 500						
http://www.uk.easynet.net	ADSL	£79.00	£295.00	10	0	Unknown
Easynet (business) DSL 1000						
http://www.uk.easynet.net	ADSL	£99.00	£295.00	10	0	Unknown
Easynet (business) DSL 2000						
http://www.uk.easynet.net	ADSL	£119.00	£295.00	10	0	Unknown
Madasafish Dazzle 500U 24						
http://www.madasafish.com	ADSL	£55.95	£0.00	999	25	Yes
Madasafish Dazzle 500U PLUS						
http://www.madasafish.com	ADSL	£59.99	£180.00	999	25	Yes
MetroNet (consumer)						
http://www.metronet.co.uk	ADSL	£58.74	£176.25	5	20	Yes
Mistral (business) 0512Kbps						
http://www.mistral.co.uk	ADSL	£0.00	£305.50	999	100	Yes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
www.net4nowt.com
Net 4 Nowt

NAME AND URL	TYPE OF ACCESS	INSTALL FEE	COST	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	NEWSGROUPS
netAxis (business) 0512Kbps						
http://www.netaxis.co.uk Nildram (consumer)	ADSL	£116.33	£352.50	999	10	Yes
http://www.getadsl.co.uk NTL	ADSL	£49.94	£176.25	999	10	Yes
http://www.ntl.co.uk Pipemedia Online (business) 0512Kbps	Cable	£24.99	£25.00	5	10	Yes
http://www.adsl.uk.net Pipemedia Online (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£137.48	£235.00	999	50	Yes
http://www.adsl.uk.net PIPEX Xtreme Solo	ADSL	£188.00	£235.00	999	50	Yes
http://www.dsl.pipex.net PIPEX Xtreme Business 500 (Self-Install)	ADSL	Free	£23.44	12	50	Yes
http://www.xtreme.pipex.net PlusNet Home Slef install	ADSL	£104.58	£70.50	12	50	Yes
http://www.plus.net PlusNet ADSL 2000	ADSL	£58.75	£22.99	999	500	Yes
http://www.plus.net PlusNet ADSL 500	ADSL	£170.38	£305.50	999	500	Yes
http://www.plus.net PlusNet ADSL Professional	ADSL	£111.63	£305.50	999	500	Yes
http://www.plus.net Quik Internet (business) 2Mbps	ADSL	£88.13	£305.50	999	250	Yes
http://www.quikinternet.co.uk Quik Internet (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£203.28	£305.50	10	0	Yes
http://www.quikinternet.co.uk Ramcom (business) 0512Kbps	ADSL	£176.25	£305.50	10	0	Yes
http://www.ramcom.co.uk Ramcom (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£129.25	£323.13	999	20	Yes
http://www.ramcom.co.uk Ramcom (business) 2Mbps	ADSL	£193.88	£323.13	999	20	Yes
http://www.ramcom.co.uk Skystorm	ADSL	£223.25	£323.13	999	20	Yes
http://www.skystorm.net Starspeeder	Satellite	£17.63	£0.00	0	0	No
http://www.starspeeder.co.uk Supanet - 0512Kbps	Satellite	£17.63	£0.00	0	0	No
http://www.supanet.com Supanet - 2Mbps	ADSL	£115.15	£305.50	999	20	Yes
http://www.supanet.com Surfanytime (business) 0512Kbps	ADSL	£173.90	£305.50	999	20	Yes
http://www.surfanytime.co.uk Surfanytime (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£117.49	£305.50	15	10	Yes
http://www.surfanytime.co.uk Surfanytime (business) 2Mbps	ADSL	£152.75	£305.50	15	10	Yes
http://www.surfanytime.co.uk SurfAnytime (consumer)	ADSL	£188.00	£305.50	15	10	Yes
http://www.surfanytime.co.uk Timeward (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£117.49	£305.50	15	10	Yes
http://www.timewarp.com Timewarp (business) 0512Kbps	ADSL	£176.25	£352.50	999	50	Yes
http://www.timewarp.co.uk Timewarp (business) 2Mbps	ADSL	£129.25	£352.50	999	50	Yes
http://www.timewarp.co.uk Timewarp (consumer)	ADSL	£223.25	£352.50	999	50	Yes
http://www.timewarp.co.uk Tiscali (consumer)	ADSL	£58.75	£176.25	999	10	Yes
http://www.tiscali.co.uk Vispa (business) 0512Kbps	ADSL	£39.99	£150.00	999	50	Yes
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk Vispa (business) 1Mbps	ADSL	£110.45	£336.05	999	15	Yes
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk Vispa (business) 2Mbps	ADSL	£150.40	£336.05	999	15	Yes
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk Vispa (consumer)	ADSL	£178.60	£336.05	999	15	Yes
http://www.vispaconnect.co.uk Xantic	ADSL	£45.00	£150.00	999	15	Yes
http://www.xanticbroadband.com Zen (business) 1Mbps	Satellite	£29.38	£180.95	0	0	No
http://www.zenadsl.com ZeNOC GamesStream 512	ADSL	£170.38	£305.50	5	50	Yes
http://www.zenoc.net	ADSL	£55.00	£100.00	5	20	Yes

PAY ISPs

WANT TO PAY FOR YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER AND BE ASSURED OF TOP QUALITY ACCESS? HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST...

ISP NAME AND URL	COST PER MONTH	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	SUPPORT COSTS	V.90	128K ISDN
Cablenet						
http://www.cablenet.net Community Internet	£4.95	999	50	Standard BT	Yes	No
http://www.community.net.uk CompuServe	£9.69	999	25	Standard BT	Yes	Yes
http://www.compuserve.co.uk Demon	£7.50	7	Unknown	National Rate	Yes	No
http://www.demon.net Easynet	£11.75	999	20	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.easynet.co.uk Force9 Lite	£11.99	999	999	Local Rate	Yes	No
http://www.force9.co.uk Free-Online Lite	£4.99	999	250	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.free-online.co.uk	£4.99	999	250	Local Rate	Yes	Yes

TOP BUYS
Digital cameras

Nikon Coolpix 880

£680
www.nikon.co.uk
What's good? Impressive 3.34 megapixel count. Loads of features. Compact and nice to handle
What's bad? It's not that cheap
Telephone: 0800 230 220
Verdict: ★★★★★

Canon Digital Ixus

£439
www.canon.co.uk
What's good? Small and stylish. Good zoom lens. Excellent image quality
What's bad? Could get lost quite easily
Telephone: 0121 6808062
Verdict: ★★★★

Kodak DX3900

£449
www.kodak.co.uk
What's good? Sits in a handy docking station, making picture transfer a doddle. Menu system is excellent
What's bad? A bit too simplistic and restricted for the money
Telephone: 0870 243 0270
Verdict: ★★★★

Pentax Optio 330

£499
www.pentax.co.uk
What's good? Excellent features and options. Compact and cheap at the price
What's bad? Its bulk can be bothersome.
Telephone: 01753 792792
Verdict: ★★★★★

Buyers' guide

Which ISP?

TOP BUYS

MP3 Players

Sonic Blue Rio600

Practical Internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

£170

www.diamondmm.co.uk

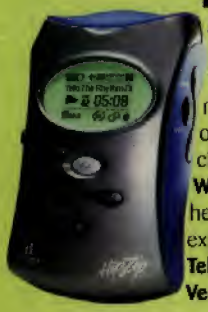
What's good? Several playback modes. Vibrant and pacy sound. Expandable up to 340Mb

What's bad? Only 32Mb memory as standard

Telephone: 01189 444400

Verdict: ★★★★★

Iomega HipZip



£290

www.iomega-europe.com

What's good? Uses removable media instead of flash memory, which is cheaper

What's bad? Bulkier and heavier than the Rio, also expensive

Telephone: 020 7365 9527

Verdict: ★★★★

Smart MP3 Player

£124

www.jedan.co.uk

What's good? Plays both normal and MP3 CDs. Decent sound quality

What's bad? Very odd interface. Not compatible with WMA or supplied with encoding software

Telephone: 020 8668 0016

Verdict: ★★★★

Samsung Yepp YP-NEU

£230

www.yepparty.com

What's good? Looks rather beautiful. Comes supplied with 64Mb of memory

What's bad? Poor sound. Sparse in terms of features. Limited information on the LCD display.

Telephone: 0800 521652

Verdict: ★★★★

ISP NAME AND URL	COST PER MONTH	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	SUPPORT COSTS	V 90	128K ISDN
Mailbox Internet						
http://www.mailbox.net.uk	£10.00	5	15	National Rate	Yes	No
Netkonect.net						
http://www.netkonect.net	£16.58	999	999	National Rate	Yes	No
Nildram						
http://www.nildram.net	£5.88	999	25	Standard BT	Yes	No
PipexDial						
http://www.dial.pipex.com	£15.00	12	50	National Rate	Yes	Yes
PlusNet Netstart						
http://www.plus.net	£9.99	999	500	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
SAQInternet						
http://www.saqnet.co.uk	£11.25	999	5	National Rate	Yes	Yes
U-NET						
http://www.u-net.net	£12.00	999	25	Local Rate	Yes	Yes

FREE ISP DIRECTORY

YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SUBSCRIPTION-FREE ISPS WHICH CHARGE ONLY FOR LOCAL CALL PHONE RATES

NAME AND URL	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	V.90	128K ISDN
4TheNet						
http://www.4thenet.co.uk	999	999	Yes	Premium - 75p	Yes	Yes
Abel GRATIS Plus						
http://www.abelgratis.co.uk	999	50	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
Ace Internet						
http://www.ace-internet.co.uk	10	5	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes
Asian Biz						
http://www.asian-biz.net	15	10	Yes	National Rate	Yes	No
Barclays Bank						
http://www.barclays.co.uk	5	0	No	National Rate	Yes	No
Barrys World						
http://www.barrysworld.com	999	0	Yes	N/A	Yes	No
blueyonder						
http://www.blueyonder.co.uk/dial	15	30	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes
Breathe Anywhere						
http://www.breathe.com	5	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
BT Access						
http://www.btclickforbusiness.com	10	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
BTopenworld Pay-as-you-go						
http://www.btopenworld.com	5	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
Callnet UK						
http://www.callnetuk.com	5	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
CharityDAYS Donate At Home Free						
http://www.charitydays.net	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	No
CharityDAYS Donate At Work Free						
http://www.charitydays.net	999	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
ClaraNET						
http://www.clara.net	999	10	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
Clearsignals						
http://www.clearsignals.net	999	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
Dabsol						
http://www.dabsol.co.uk	999	999	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
Devilnet UK						
http://www.devilnet.co.uk	999	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
Dial Start						
http://www.dialstart.net	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
Dizzi						
http://www.dizzi.net	999	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
Earthlink						
http://www.earthlink.co.uk	999	25	No	Premium - 75p	Yes	Yes
Ecosse						
http://www.ecosse.net	999	999	No	N/A	Yes	Yes
Euphony.net						
http://www.euphony.net	999	999	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
Fasthosts LoCall						
http://dial.fasthosts.co.uk	999	200	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	No
Firenet						
http://www.firenet.ws	999	999	Yes	Unknown	Yes	No
Fish						
http://www.fish.co.uk	999	0	Unknown	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
Free UK						
http://www.freeuk.net	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	No
Freebeeb						
http://www.beeb.net	999	20	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	No
Freedom 2 Surf						
http://www.freedom2surf.net	999	25	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes
FreeInternet						
http://www.free-internet.co.uk	1	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
Freeola.net						
http://www.freeola.net	999	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes
Free-Online Free						
http://www.free-online.co.uk	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
Freeserve						
http://www.freeserve.net	999	15	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
FreeUK						
http://www.freeuk.co.uk	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	No
Games-World						
http://www.games-world.net	1	10	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes
GayServe						

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com

Net 4 Nowt

NAME AND URL	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE Mb	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	V.90	128K ISDN
http://www.gayserve.co.uk Genie Internet	999	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
http://www.genie.co.uk Get Free Internet	1	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.getfreeinternet.co.uk Gioserve	999	5	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.gioserve.net Global Nomad	999	999	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.globalnomad.co.uk Go There Internet	1	0	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.gothere.uk.com GoFree	999	999	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
http://www.gofree.co.uk Go-Free	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.gofree.to Go-Legend	5	10	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.go-legend.net HBC21	999	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.hbc21.com Hot-Toast	0	0	No	Unknown	Yes	No
http://www.hot-toast.com IC24	999	999	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.ic24.net Icom43	5	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.icom43.net In2Home	999	15	No	Premium - 75p	Yes	No
http://www.in2home.net/signup IofM.net	5	15	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	No
http://www.iofm.net Islam Direct	999	999	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.islamdirect.com JellyPeople.com	5	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.jellypeople.com Jings	999	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
http://www.jings.com JungleLink	999	999	Yes	National Rate	Yes	No
http://www.junglelink.net Kingston NetTime	999	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.kchd.co.uk MacUnlimited	999	20	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	No
http://www.macunlimited.net Madasafish	999	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.madasafish.com Ministry of Sound	999	999	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	No
http://www.ministryofsound.net NASCR	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.nascr.net Natwest.com	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.natwest.com Netscape Online	0	0	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.netscapeonline.co.uk NHS People	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.nhspeople.net NTL World	5	15	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.ntlworld.com PlusNet Free	5	10	Yes	Premium - £1.00	Yes	No
http://www.plus.net RYA On-line	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.rya-online.net Silvermead Free @ Home	999	10	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.silvermead.net Sniff Out Classic	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.sniffout.net Supanet Classic	999	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.supanet.com Surf&Save	999	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.surfandsave.co.uk SurfAnytime	5	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.surfanytime.co.uk Telinet	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.telinet.co.uk TescoNet	999	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes
http://www.tesco.net The Mail	5	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.themail.co.uk Themutual.net	1	50	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	No
http://www.themutual.net Tiscali Classic	5	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.tiscali.co.uk Totalserve	999	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No
http://www.totalserve.co.uk UK Linux	999	999	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes
http://www.uklinux.net UK Online	999	20	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
http://www.ukonline.net VirginNet	999	999	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes
http://www.virgin.net Waitrose.com	5	10	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	No
http://www.waitrose.com WHSmithnet Pay As You Surf	999	20	Yes	Free	Yes	No
http://www.whsmith.co.uk	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No

TOP BUYS

Webcams

Philips Vesto Pro

£60–70 inc VAT
www.pcstuff.phillips.com
What's good? Attractive little camera, with a good resolution. Natural colour
What's bad? It can be difficult to keep steady because the locking screw sometimes comes loose
Telephone: 0800 8689 4444
Verdict: ★★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Creative Webcam Go Plus

£129
www.europe.creative.com
What's good? Innovative design. Can be used as a digital camera. Good range of features.
What's bad? Expensive. The digital camera aspect of the Go Plus is a tad gimmicky
Telephone: 01245 265265
Verdict: ★★★★

Sony CMR-PC2

£89.99
www.sony.co.uk
What's good? It's tiny, yet somehow manages to squeeze in the best picture quality we've seen yet
What's bad? It's a little bit fiddly to operate
Telephone: 0800 262 37669
Verdict: ★★★★

Logitech Quickcam Web

£59.99
www.agfa.co.uk
What's good? Get free Web space and streaming with spotlife
What's bad? Average picture quality. TWAIN gremlins got under our skin
Telephone: 020 7309 0127
Verdict: ★★★

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• Email Aliases	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Web Forwarding	✓	×	×	×
• Unlimited FTP	×	✓	✓	✓
• Cgi-Bin	×	✓	✓	✓
• Site Statistics	×	✓	✓	✓
• MySQL PHP SSI	×	×	✓	✓

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Maximum Site Traffic (Data transfer in Gigabytes per month)	1	1	2.5	5	10
Unlimited E-Mail Aliases (anything@yourdomain.com)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Firewall & Monitoring (Increased security and reliability)			✓	✓	✓
Online Administration (Administer email and users)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Run your own CGI scripts (Perl 5 CGI supported)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
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Shutdown with Jo Cole

ONLY A FOOL would neglect the chance to have a quick dip in the waves of online weirdness. Which is the purpose of this page. Each issue we're going to be taking a look at some of the more bizarre sites on offer. If you have a favourite, email **pixie@paragon.co.uk** and we'll try to feature it.

The future's bright...?

FORGET THE DAILY HOROSCOPES – IF YOU WANT A GLIMPSE AT WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, CROSS THE NET'S PALM WITH SILVER

IT HAS TO be said that Most Web sites which claim to hold the key to your future are crap. They either ask for money or are festooned with rainbows and unicorns and New Age music. Not so at Facade (**www.facade.com**). This is the best place to come for free tarot, rune, I Ching and Biorhythm readings. Pick your method of divination, type in a question or concern, then wait for the prediction. The site is very well designed and manages to avoid 'Rosy Lee' type stereotypes.

The Astrology Prince is a fortune-telling whizz

If you don't fancy tarot, head along to Frank's Magic Hi-Ball (**www.snarkbite.com/askfrank.htm**) to consult the oracle that is Frank Sinatra. He's here to answer your questions through the power of his magic hi-ball glass. However, if Frank doesn't manage to rock your cocktail party, maybe you need guidance from a more organic source. The Little Astrology Prince (**www.astprince.com**) has all sorts of fortune-telling skills, including the ability to see what the future brings through the medium of sushi. Pick five bits of sushi so the little prince can reveal what lies before you.

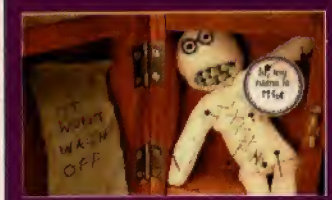
If all of this sushi lark seems a bit fishy (kill me now) there are sites that offer that something a bit special. A good place to start is **www.uidaho.edu/~bokm9606/magic/magict.htm**. The awkward URL is well worth persevering with, for it is your key to the mysterious world of The Magic Mr T Head. Pose your question to the bejewelled one, then wait while that crazy fool comes up with a reply.

Instead of seeing what the future holds for you, how about having a direct effect on someone else's? Thanks to PinStruck.com (**www.pinstruck.com**) you can send a cuddly anonymous voodoo curse to a lucky recipient and make them think their time has come. Pick your message, choose what your doll should look like, then spread your voodoo love across the Net. It may not be nice, but it sure is fun.

You should definitely pay this grinning fella a visit

A word from the wise...

THIS ISSUE IT'S TYSON LIOTTA – THE MAN BEHIND PINSTRUCK.COM



Who came up with the idea?

I came up with the idea when I was working for a previous company. I saw how quickly little email jokes were passed around the office. There is an actual doll that was created and photographed for the site. I sewed and photographed the doll myself, then all the appearance variations were added in Photoshop. In the real doll, there are no teeth. The teeth were composited in Photoshop from a stock art photograph of a human skull.

How many people have used the site?

As of this writing, the site has sent out 1,384,405 curses. It has been up for about 2.5 years.

Have any voodoo priests condemned/praised you?

This happens occasionally. It's either people into voodoo or Wiccan folks. Most of the time these people tell us we are either "not handling voodoo right and we can tell you how to improve your site" or "making voodoo/magic look bad because it's supposed to be used for good". I think much of the site's humour is derived from its irony. With it's combination of religion and technology, PinStruck is so far removed from actual voodoo, I don't see how anyone could conclude that PinStruck curses would have any affect on anyone. But, people do take the site very seriously. We considered at one time offering to remove PinStruck curses for a fee, but we just couldn't stretch our morals far enough to do something so deceptive :)

The bizarre bazaar

Get more weirdness for your wonga with these strange shopping sites

Wacky Jac

www.wackyjac.com

Any self-respecting witch will get themselves over to this site, for it is bubbling over with clothing and accessories. From t-shirts that advertise your pagan persuasions ($22) though to a delightful Dolly Bra ($48), or a Get What You Want spell kit ($36), there's plenty to please. Don't worry about it being a US site – the service is fast, friendly and secure.

UKJOKESHOP.com

www.ukjokeshop.com

No one can deny the power of a carefully placed fart cushion, but alas, the supply is depleting as toy shops become inundated with flashing robots and talking bundles of fur. Thankfully there is UKJOKESHOP.com. So it may not be the most sophisticated site in the world, but when you're dealing with Fart Cushions (99p), Inflatable Cats (£3.99) and the delightful Crap a Lot Sugar (89p), sophistication loses its appeal somewhat. If you tire of jokes, you can also pick up wigs, fancy dress, magic tricks and gifts.

Practical internet

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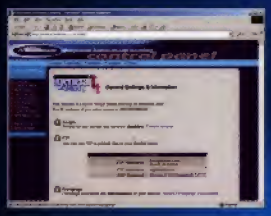

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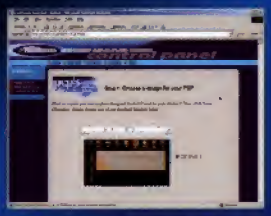

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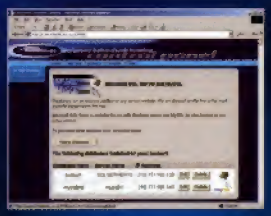

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